

TOP STORY: SCHINDLER'S LIST AND HOLOCAUST HISTORY

March 21 - April 3, 1994

# In THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

## THE BETRAYAL OF THE EPA



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# EDITORIAL

## TIME TO HELP ISRAEL SAVE THE PEACE ACCORD

**E**nough is enough. The murder of 30 Palestinians by a single Israeli fanatic, and the subsequent killing of at least a dozen more Palestinians in routine peace-keeping police action, has struck a raw nerve throughout the world. Even in Israel, tens of thousands of protesters poured into the streets, as the leader of Peace Now proclaimed that Israelis were sick of the settlers and their extremism. Knesset member Shulamit Aloni branded those in Hebron "extremists and racists," and, while Peace Now has called only for the removal of the more fanatical settlers,

*Dismantling  
the settlements  
in the occupied  
territories  
is now a  
precondition  
for peace.  
Clinton can  
help bring this  
about by  
honoring the  
official U.S.  
position.*

many demonstrators have demanded the removal of all Israeli settlements from the occupied territories.

In the Israeli cabinet, too, there has been an unprecedented reaction. Seven of the 15 members have urged the closing of the Hebron settlement, complaining that it creates needless friction and security risks. But, as one of two members who opposed removing the settlers argued, there are many places where friction between Arabs and Jews is great. "If we evacuate Hebron, then why not other places?" he asked.

It was a good question, one that Israelis will now be debating with increasing frequency as the peace

process continues—if it continues.

And the answer will be determined by whether or not an effective majority of Israelis are serious about accommodation with the Palestinian people. For the policy of creating settlements in the occupied territories was designed—and is still being carried out—to ensure permanent occupation and to frustrate Palestinian desires for an independent state of their own in the West Bank and Gaza. (See story on page 26.)

By calling for a solution "based on Security Council resolutions 242 and 238," the peace accord implicitly accepted the goal of total Israeli withdrawal from the territories seized in the 1967 war. To accomplish this, the settlements must be abandoned, the expropriation of land in the territories must stop and the land already seized must be returned to its Palestinian owners.

A first step in this direction should be an immediate end to all subsidies now granted to the settlements and an end to construction of infrastructure and new housing. This should be followed by an orderly repatriation of settlers and the transfer of settler property back to local Palestinian residents.

A worldwide consensus now exists in favor of the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the occupied territories. And everyone understands—especially the right-wing Israelis—that the settlements are the main roadblock to that goal. Even the United States, which has been no friend of the Palestinians, has officially opposed settlement because converting occupied land is a flagrant violation of international law.

But official opposition and real opposition are not necessarily the same thing. And, in fact, every American administration, including the present one, has effectively supported the settlements by continuing the lavish subsidies that have made it possible for Israel to invest so heavily in their construction, maintenance and protection.

Ultimately, of course, the decision to honor the peace accord by withdrawing from the occupied territories must be made in Israel by Israelis. And it is a healthy sign that a public debate there is now beginning in earnest. But the United States has a unique responsibility in this matter. For not only did our government play a central role in promoting the peace accords, but it is also Israel's most powerful and influential friend. So it is incumbent on the Clinton administration to live up to the spirit of the accord and the letter of its official position on the settlements. Making withdrawal from the settlements a condition of continued further aid to Israel would be the most principled, though also the least likely, way to do this. But there are many other options. However it is done, the United States should now take decisive action to save the accord and, at long last, help bring peace to the Mideast. ◀



## IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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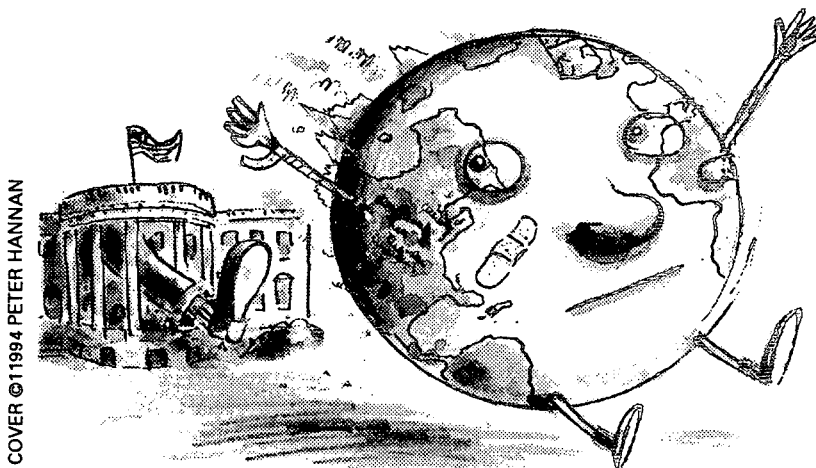


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# LETTERS

## Biased board

I was pleased to see David Moberg's article on William B. Gould (*ITT*, Jan. 10), Clinton's nominee to the chair of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

The NLRB badly needs an overhaul. What goes on is beyond belief. To win a union-representation election with a management that decides to fight the organizing attempt, you need workers willing and able to self-immolate.

I am a union organizer for the Communications Workers of America (CWA), and we just won an election at the Carrier Foundation, a psychiatric hospital in Belle Meade, N.J. During the campaign, 35 workers were laid off. Most laid-off workers and supervisors went back to work within a few days, but the people in the dietary department that were union supporters never came back to work. The union

filed an unfair labor practice charge, but the board's regional director found the hospital management's behavior to be proper. The board argued that management proved economic difficulties and that they had no knowledge of any union campaign going on.

The board never informed the union that they were investigating financial difficulties. A week after the layoffs, my local, CWA Local 1040, held a press conference at which we showed that "economic difficulties" were only an excuse for the layoffs. Through access to the hospital's 990 forms (public information), we were able to show that the hospital had \$30 million in reserve, that they had continuously been making money (Carrier, a non-profit hospital, made \$3.4 million profit in fiscal year 1991-92), and that they had monies stashed away in another outfit under their control—Carrier Developmental Fund. We were also able to show the higher

salaries and incredible fringe benefits (including golf club membership) that many Carrier administrators have.

The NLRB never questioned us about this. The NLRB never questioned why none of the higher-paid administrators were laid off. The NLRB never questioned why most of the people that were laid off came back to work, some almost immediately, but not the union supporters.

After we filed for the election, the hospital administrators, especially in departments of mostly minority workers, conducted an abusive campaign. They told employees that if the union won the election, they would be fired. They changed people's hours and forced many to work overtime with two- or three-hour breaks in between.

It is a miracle that we won this election. The vote was very close (86-81). Today, our support is much broader because workers have realized that management lied throughout the campaign. (When the lies were mentioned to the NLRB agent, the response was: "You can lie, too.") Board agents refuse to acknowledge the reality of working people's lives. From the union's side, they talk to fearful workers. From management's side, they talk to lawyers who specialize in union busting.

Lorenzo Canizares  
Organizer, Communications Workers  
Of America Local 1040  
Trenton, N.J.

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



## Booze myth

There is a side to the drug coin that's missing from your letters of Feb. 7. Writers Grim and Seidenfeld needed great leaps of faith in order to drive home their points.

The argument for the legalization of killer street drugs is familiar. It was used successfully in 1933 when the 18th Amendment was repealed. The myth runs that Prohibition was a failure.

But the truth is that Prohibition was not a failure. Quite the opposite, if our nation's health was the goal. The facts tell the story. For openers, consider the cold data on all forms of liver disease, a serious pathology that has several possible etiologies. Chronic alcoholism is responsible for 75 percent of all cases and deaths, second only to driving while intoxicated (DWI) as an alcohol-related mortality. Medical literature well documents the rise and fall of death rates before and after Prohibition from both DWI and cirrhosis. The reduced rates of mortality and morbidity remained at new lows during the life of the hilariously administered 18th Amendment. Repeal started the upward climb of such tragedies that have not stopped since. Highway bloodletting and alcohol go hand in hand.

Contrary to the impressions created by novels and the lore of the glitzy jazz age, most people in America during Prohibition did not patronize speakeasies and bootleggers. The many Americans who broke the law to any serious degree were very much in the minority. There is clear data on serious and often fatal drunk-on-the-job that accidents declined sharply during the Prohibition era. It was shown that most job-related accidents occurred after lunch, when the workers' reflexes were dulled by the meal-time alcohol intake. The 18th Amendment closed the corner bar and saloon. Law-abiding working people did not seek out the mob-run joints. They and their children did not resume drinking until the amendment's repeal in 1933.

The thinking that such legalization

would affect the criminal conspiracy in any positive way is that of the privileged class avoiding the real causes behind the drug problem in America. The street-drug calamity in the United States is a direct result of our infamous decade in Vietnam from which more than a half-million hard-core addicts and sellers were mustered out into civilian life that offered no housing, jobs, education or health care. Thus followed crime, homelessness and AIDS.

The only way to solve the drug issue in the United States is to shift our priorities away from Persian Gulf Desert Storms, S&L bailouts and the insatiable thirst of the Pentagon and toward schools, health care, employment and housing. Butter for guns. It's that simple.

Don Sloan  
New York

## Fable

Your spate of articles on the drug war (*ITT*, Dec. 27) reminded me of a story I once heard.

Once upon a time in the Americas, there lived a very wealthy man who controlled vast tracts of stolen land. His family, with the help of their friends, had killed and driven off the original owners. On this land the rich man grew huge quantities of a crop that was habit-forming and dangerous to the health of those who used it. Many people, especially among the clergy, thought the crop was evil and should be outlawed. In some countries, sale and use of this addictive crop was prohibited and severely punished.

The workers who planted, harvested and packed the rich man's crop lived in abject slavery. When the government tried to regulate and tax his crop, the rich man led a long and bloody war against that government. Many officials and soldiers of the government were killed in the war, and the man became a hero to his countrymen.

The deadly crop was not coca and the rich man's name was not Pablo

Escobar. The crop was tobacco and the very rich man was George Washington.

Marvin A. Gluck  
Topanga, Calif.

## Love and theft

It is the source of endless ingenuity and selflessness, this drive within European Americans to see African-Americans as charming children.

In David Futrelle's review of Eric Lott's *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (*ITT*, Jan. 24), the assertion is made that only Africa can produce heartfelt music and dance. Any white performer who attempts it is merely a sad imitation of the genuine.

This contention is patronizing, racist and very, very popular. All races, however, have had singers and musicians who could reach inside themselves and their cultures and bring forth the deepest pleasures and pains. And dance of all kinds is universal. Yet, in our country, the notion prevails that being soulful is the sacred ground of African-Americans.

But isn't saying that blacks can feel more earnestly and powerfully than whites akin to saying that whites can think more clearly and creatively than blacks? Even so, it's all right to embrace the former, perhaps because white sentimentality toward people of color is the same now as it was when the accepted label was "colored people."

In the late '50s, Lenny Bruce had a routine about a hip white host trying to put his black party guest at ease. After a moment of awkward silence, the host finally blurts out: "That Bojangles. Christ, could he tap-dance."

Monty Cagle  
Decatur, Ala.

*David Futrelle replies: Nowhere did I "assert," or even imply, that blacks are somehow more "soulful" than whites. I merely pointed out that, over the years, many white performers have imitated the styles of black performers. If you're going to read this much into a short review, you should read more carefully.*



# InSHORT



CEARCUT: THE TRAGEDY OF INDUSTRIAL FORESTRY

## THE CUTTING EDGE

In the old days of the ecology movement, conservation groups regularly distributed books and calendars featuring photos of nature's pristine beauty. But the times are changing. Sierra Club Books and Earth Island Press recently released *Clearcut: The Tragedy of Industrial Forestry*. It's a slick, coffee-table-style picture book, but you won't find any Ansel Adams photos here; page after page documents the devastation of clearcut logging in North America. *Clearcut* is intended primarily as a tool for activists. Thousands of free copies are being made available to grass-roots organizers and individuals willing to use *Clearcut* to pressure politicians and policy-makers. For more information, contact the Rainforest Action Network, 450 Sansome Street, #700, San Francisco, CA 94111, (415) 398-4404.

—Miles Harvey



By Woody Igou

## Packing for Thailand

Black-market physicians are performing genital enlargement operations that involve

the injection of olive oil, chalk and other substances into the penis, the *Bangkok Post*



reports. "I've even seen [penises containing] bits of the Bangkok telephone directory," a hospital official in the city of Chiang Mai explained.

*Dial S for Stupid.*

## Testing, testing

Bowing to political pressures, California education officials have dropped two stories by

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alice Walker from state-wide English tests. Officials



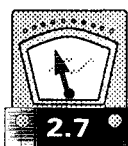
felt that Walker's "Am I Blue" would be upsetting to students because its animal-rights message could be construed as "anti-meat eating." According to Board of Education president Marion McDowell, "that could be rather disturbing to some stu-

dents who would then be expected to write a good essay while they were upset." Only a few weeks earlier, a conservative Christian group called the Traditional Values Coalition had gotten another story by Walker dropped from tests. The group complained that Walker's story, describing the wedding of a mother who questions religion and marriage, was "anti-religious." A spokesman said, "We're pleased and we're wondering what other stories might be in there."

*Goodbye Siddhartha.*

### Next Copernican Revolution

Samsung Electronics of South Korea has announced the invention of Bio-Television. Researchers have designed a set that converts ordinary electromagnetic beams into



waves that mimic those of sunlight on animals and plants near the television.

Tests showed an increase in the freshness of flowers placed near the TV.

*Goodbye to heliocentricity,  
hello to TV-centricity.*

### APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Vapid Cultural Zephyrs
2. E Channel Stupid
3. Unauthorized Biography Zone
4. Republican Convention Rerun
5. Bob Dole Spleenic
6. Mega-Dittos from Hell
7. NRA Heart and Brains
8. Pyongyang on my mind
9. Disavowed by Bosnian Serbs
10. Hurry, Melt the Polar Cap!

## RETURN TO BURLINGTON

**T**he March 1 local elections in Burlington, Vt., produced what is probably the most significant victory for the city's Progressive Coalition since Bernie Sanders first won the mayoralty in 1981.

The city council contests were viewed as a test of whether the country's most successful left-wing third party would endure or begin to wither away. Its prospects seemed perilous following the defeat last year of Peter Clavelle, Congressman Sanders' successor as mayor.

But in the recent elections the Progressives didn't merely survive; they scored a triumph exceeding even their own most optimistic expectations. For the first time, the coalition and its supporters will hold a majority on the city council.

The 14-member body will include five card-carrying Progressives and three allied independents. With the likely support of at least a couple of the council's four Democrats, the left should be able to override most vetoes cast by Republican mayor Peter Brownell.

But that doesn't mean this city of 39,000 is about to become a crucible of neo-socialism. "If we had this minority back in the mid-'80s, that would have meant something quite different than it does now," says Progressive councilor Brian Pine. Municipal coffers were brimming at the height of the Sanders era; today, Burlington's budget isn't close to being balanced.

The new council majority will have to focus its efforts not on exciting social initiatives but on prosaic measures aimed at closing a nearly \$1 million budget gap. Some Progressives are actually sounding a bit like Republicans in suggesting that city employees be given rewards for finding ways of cutting costs. Tax increases appear inevitable as well, although the Progressives will certainly not repeat Clavelle's fatal mistake of proposing a hike in the regressive property tax.

Their likeliest move is to raise the levy on hotel rooms, restaurant meals and entertainment. That sort of tax increase is acceptable to most Progressives because it would be borne mostly by tourists, suburbanites and the city's most affluent residents.

Progressives will also return to the theme, constantly sounded by Sanders during his eight years in City Hall, of developing alternatives to the property tax. But any new revenue-raising measure cannot be passed without the consent of the Vermont State Legislature, which historically has been reluctant to expand the tax authority of localities.

Insuring effective delivery of city services was another Sanders tenet, and the younger generation of Progressives that he helped spawn will be sure to fix its attention on the fundamentals of local government. Indeed, the Progressives were able to secure a council majority largely as a result of voter dissatisfaction with the Republican mayor's cuts in basic services, especially snowplowing. Brownell picked the wrong winter to economize on clearing the city's streets and sidewalks.

Many Burlingtonians have likewise grown bored with Brownell only one year after he put an end to more than a decade of Progressive rule. Brownell, a former fiscal officer of the local Martin Marietta weapons plant, styles himself a non-ideological management specialist. But his low-profile approach has not been well received in a city accustomed to telegenic activity on the part of its top pol.

Clavelle, currently doing development work on the Caribbean island of Grenada, is girding for a rematch against Brownell. Much could change before the March 1995 mayoral election, but right now the Progressives seem well positioned for a total takeover of this small city with a big political reputation.

—Kevin J. Kelley

## A PROGRESSIVE COALITION IN THE HEARTLAND

Until a few months ago, Toledo, Ohio, hadn't had a mayor with administrative powers in six decades. In the '30s, the city switched from a strong-mayor type of government to a system that placed power in the hands of an appointed city manager. The shift came, not coincidentally, after voters put a socialist in the mayor's office. Ironically, a candidate with strong left credentials almost retook City Hall this time around. A Democrat narrowly defeated independent Mike Ferner in the November vote. But Ferner's impressive campaign offers hope to progressive forces working at the local level all over the country. And the fate of the movement he created may have implications outside Toledo.

The campaign had roots two decades old. Ferner, who became a conscientious objector while serving in the Navy during Vietnam, returned to Toledo in the mid-'70s. He became a leader in the anti-nuclear power movement, a union organizer, and worked on energy, environmental and social-justice issues.

Ferner won city council races in 1989 and 1991. Last September, he finished second in a non-partisan mayoral primary, which qualified him for the November runoff against Democrat Carty Finkbeiner. Ferner lost by just 672 out of 92,470 votes.

Now, four months after the election, Ferner's supporters are hoping to build on the energy the campaign created.

"Mike's campaign had a transformational aspect to it," says Richard Grossman, a longtime colleague in the safe energy and jobs movement. "People were not only energized, but they had a deeper sense of the role of citizens in democracy—that citizens have the right to define the government and they are the government."

Some Ferner supporters have become active in groups with strong ties to the 42-year-old politician, including the Campaign for Lower Electric Rates, which is run by Ohio Citizen Action. Other supporters hope to create a new entity with a progressive agenda. Options include:

- Forming a watchdog organization to keep tabs on the new mayor and the Democrat-controlled city council.
- Organizing a group that would pursue Ferner's efforts to develop a structured system for citizen participation in city hall, especially with regards to the city council.
- Starting a local chapter of Labor Party Advocates, an organization that hopes to form a third national party to represent working people.

Pressure to form a Labor Party Advocates chapter comes from the Oil,

## MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

### How much is enough?

If it seems like every time you turn on the television, there are more commercials, you're right—especially in prime time. After a brief dip last year, according to a report issued by the American Association of Advertising Agencies and the Association of National Advertisers, the total ad time in an hour is pushing 20 minutes on the most ad-cluttered network, CBS.

Total expenditures for TV advertising have finally topped the total for newspaper advertising—until now the clear leader. The Center for the Study of Commercialism, meanwhile, has asked the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to return to its pre-Reagan policy of limiting commercial time on TV stations.

### Choices, choices

Get ready to get nostalgic for the old days, when the very idea of the Playboy Channel could shock municipal officials in charge of franchising. Here comes the Adam & Eve Channel, a name familiar to catalog shoppers of erotica. It's the very first home shopping network dedicated to sexual aids.

### Back to work

Broadcasters got a very easy ride on equal-opportunity hiring issues during the Reagan-Bush era, but that's over now, according to FCC head Reed Hundt. The FCC has issued



almost half a million dollars in fines, to 20 radio stations and one cable station, for failing to observe equal-opportunity regulations.

### Joe Camel and kids

The surgeon general's report on young people and smoking may put Joe Camel at risk—at least that's what Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders and medical researchers, who see a link between advertising and smoking, hope. The phallic cartoon creature has been pitching the joys of smoking at young people successfully enough to increase Camel's youth-market share, and also to raise public indignation. R.J. Reynolds has argued that the ads just convince smokers to switch brands, not to start, and that little kids don't associate Joe with smoking. An *Advertising Age* poll conducted by Gallup showed that two-thirds of Americans think ads do influence kids, and that more than half think all cigarette ads should be banned.

R.J. Reynolds, meanwhile, has issued results of its own poll of kids 10-17. It pooh-poohs concern with these figures: While "only" 73 percent recognized Joe Camel, 96 percent recognized Tony the Tiger. "Only" 81 percent knew Joe Camel was a Camel cigarette symbol. Merely 3 percent of those who recognized Joe said they had "a positive attitude toward smoking," and they were all over 15. The failure rate must be what keeps R.J. Reynolds so zealously promoting Joe.

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Chemical & Atomic Workers (OCAW), which endorsed Ferner last year. OCAW's Glen Boatman thinks such a party would play well in a city that has lost 15,000 manufacturing jobs since the '80s.

"The Toledo mayor's race indicated the willingness of large numbers of people to break with the tradition of supporting Democratic candidates," says Boatman. "The Democratic Party no longer represents working people's interests."

But Patrick McGuire, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Toledo, thinks that forming a third party would be a mistake. "If Mike had said, 'I want to form a third party to take over the Democratic or Republican Party,' he would have been much less successful," says McGuire. "He got a lot of support from people *mad at*—mad at the Republicans, mad at the Democrats and mad at the bad ol' boys who pissed away the city into the financial ocean."

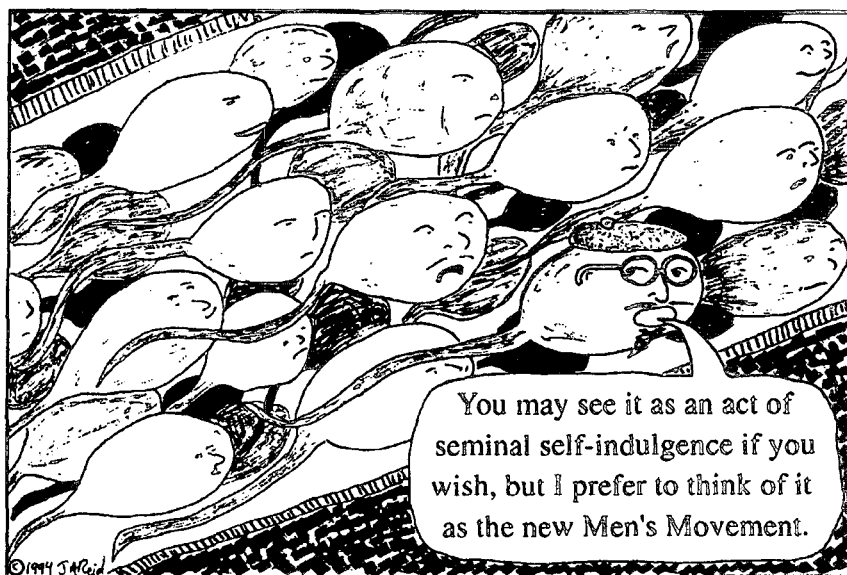
Ferner supports the effort to create a third party, but says he's unsure whether he would become active in such a group. Otherwise, he has not outlined his plans. He remains involved in the struggle to create a municipal electric company to compete with Toledo Edison, an investor-owned utility with some of the highest commercial and residential rates in the country because of its reliance on nuclear power.

Can the Ferner coalition stick together? McGuire thinks it's a tough challenge. "In the Ferner campaign, you had environmentalists and labor, people who are small business owners and people advocating some element of public ownership," he explains. "They're not directly in conflict, but you have to pay attention to maintain those alliances."

—James Drew

### ROUGH CUTS

By JA Reid





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## DOWN-HOME PEACE

*Linda Stout organizes the Piedmont*

Linda Stout said goodbye to Radcliffe College this January and drove home to the North Carolina Piedmont in the RV that doubles as her home. The trip marked the end of a year's tenure as a public policy fellow at Radcliffe's Bunting Institute. Part of Stout's fellowship included teaching Harvard students—a rare assignment for a low-income Southern woman with a high school diploma.

Upon her arrival at Radcliffe, some in the Harvard community were more than a little taken aback by this larger-than-life presence with the dangly earrings. Stout's drawl, combined with her stubbornly non-standard grammar, seemed, well, odd in a bastion of intellectual elitism. But word got around quickly when the crowds drawn to her colloquia on community organizing spilled into the hallways.

Stout, 40, is the founder and director of North Carolina's Piedmont Peace Project (PPP)—a multiracial network of 500 textile mill workers, farmers and maids that operates in one of the most conservative parts of the South. Most project members—predominantly low-income women of color—had given politics a wide berth before finding their way to PPP.

There, typically, these women undergo a change. In their early weeks with PPP, they observe a guarded silence, assuming someone else—a man—will take the lead. A year later, these women, whose first political statement may have been an offer to clean the PPP office, are running get-out-the-vote campaigns and lobbying the mayor for street lights in their communities.

PPP's voice carries throughout the Piedmont/Sandhills region, an area the size of Massachusetts, and echoes all the way to Washington, D.C. At the

## ETC.

By David Futrelle

### Revolution rock

There is a fine line, a member of Rob Reiner's fictional schlock-rock band Spinal Tap once explained, between clever and stupid.

Most rock concept albums—from the Who's *Tommy* to Styx's *Mr. Roboto*—have fallen decidedly on the stupid side of the line. But now, at long last, there is a concept album that lives up to the concept of the concept album: Killdozer's "Uncompromising War on Art Under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" (Touch and Go).

The concept is simple enough: what would happen if a scruffy, obscure ur-alternative band from Wisconsin (named, say, Killdozer) suddenly abandoned punk nihilism for the comforting certainties of neo-Leninist dogma? The results are not pretty; luckily, the band seems to have embraced its new ideology with tongue firmly in cheek.

Killdozer's music is something of an acquired taste. Band leader Michael Gerald growls his unintelligible vocals over a backdrop of grinding guitars; the songs, somehow, all manage to sound like funeral dirges.

But the true joy of the album is its liner notes—short explanations of the songs, written in somber, mock sect-speak by Gerald, complete with footnote references to Kautsky, Mao, Debs and the Wisconsin Department of Tourism.

Songs include:

• *Final Market*, which "tells the inspiring story of a youth,

exploited by his employer, a ruthless newspaper distributor. Finally, the People's Revolution arrives, and the lad justifiably kills his boss."

• *Earl Scheib*, which suggests that the car-painting mogul was in fact a socialist hero of sorts, killed through the nefarious machinations of Lee Iacocca, "rumored to be fearful of Comrade Scheib's influence on both the proletariat and contemporary U.S. economic theory."

• *The Pig Was Cool*, which "tells the story of one young idealist's fantasy of a socialist utopia, where the police are helpful and considerate of their fellow citizens, as in Castro's Cuba."

### Ruled by rules

In an insightful essay in the March issue of *Harper's*, novelist Mary Gaitskill argues against attempts to fight campus date rape with stringent sexual regulations—such as the Antioch College rules that require students to get explicit permission for every small move in a sexual encounter. For Gaitskill, rules have always been part of the problem. Recalling her own experience with date rape in her teen years, she now realizes that it was her own rule-bound middle-class upbringing that left her unable to say no to a man she didn't want. "Since I had been taught only how to follow rules that were somehow more important than I was, I didn't know what to do in a situation where no rules obtained and that required me to speak up on my own behalf," she observes. "I had never been taught that my behalf mattered. And so I felt helpless, even victimized, without really knowing why."

heart of the group's political vision is the insight that a growing shortage of local social services is inextricably bound up with a skewed national budget that favors the Pentagon.

It's a message that ruffles more than a few feathers in a region best known for Jesse Helms, the headquarters of the Moral Majority, rabid union-busting and a still vigorous Ku Klux Klan. But PPP has learned how to break through the static, command attention and compel change. The eight-year-old organization has registered 15,000 black voters and delivered another 30,000 to the polls.

One man who has taken notice is U.S. Rep. Bill Hefner (D-NC). A few years back, progressive Congress watchers gave him a zero ranking on peace and justice issues. All of a sudden his voting record began to change—sometimes reaching as high as the 80th percentile.

Talking with Stout in her office on a main street in Kannapolis—six staff members, two tidy white cottages, and a deck with grill and picnic table—it's hard to believe that in the late '80s PPP was forced to go underground and remain there for two years, due in part to harassment from the far right. "That's true," she says, brushing off probing questions with: "Sorry, we have to think about the security of our members."

About her own life, Stout talks easily and frankly—except about the death threats and her daily battle against multiple sclerosis. She's a woman who has refused to be paralyzed by hate, by illness, by the medical bills that doomed her tenant-farming family to permanent poverty after her mother was disabled, or by the loss of her father to industrial poisons and cancer after 17 years in the mill.

Stout grew up in a trailer with no plumbing. Despite her straight A's, school counselors tracked her into non-college vocational courses. She denies none of the pain; she has simply moved on. And it helps, a visitor can only suppose, that this 13th-generation Quaker is also one of the most gregarious people in the Piedmont.

"When you're raised rural and poor," says Stout, "you have the feeling that you're not as good, not as smart as others." Uprooting "internalized oppression," as they call it at PPP, is a lifetime challenge.

Stout can regale a group of supporters with examples of how otherwise progressive middle-class colleagues have tried to relegate her to the psychosocial ghetto in which they expect poor Southerners to abide. But Stout has decided that most middle-class activists aren't irrevocably classist; they just need assistance in learning to see beyond themselves. After all, Stout reasons, if low-income and affluent folks don't figure out how to work together, progressive politics doesn't have a chance.

Stout's RV—her home on wheels—will be logging far more than its usual mileage starting this spring. PPP is about to launch a three-year national training program to teach the PPP organizing model to a dozen groups around the country—half of them low income, the other half middle-class progressives who seek to learn how privilege can be put effectively in service to a working-class political agenda. The eventual goal is to pair each low-income group with a fully trained support organization and to begin to tackle national policy changes.

—Jane Wholey

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# THE FIRST STONE

## TALK OF POLITICS AND TOXICS

By Joel Bleifuss

Several weeks ago I went in search of 10 good deeds for which President Bill Clinton and his administration deserve praise. Time and again, the people I interviewed were unable to come up with an example of a Clinton administration policy that was unreservedly pro-environment.

What has gone wrong? I called Lois Gibbs, director of the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes (CCHW), which provides support services for about 8,000 grass-roots organizations waging environmental battles across the country. Since founding CCHW 13 years ago, Gibbs has seen the Falls Church, Va.-based group grow to a staff of 14 with an annual budget of nearly a million dollars.

Although Gibbs operates near Washington, she is not "of Washington." She is outspokenly critical of both the current administration and her colleagues in the Big 10—the mainstream, Washington-based environmental organizations.

During the national debate over the free trade treaties, Gibbs opposed both the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which passed last year, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which still needs to be approved by the Senate. She argues that both treaties undercut U.S. environmental laws, because regulations already on the books can now be defined as barriers to trade. Similarly, Gibbs is critical of the administration's attempt to do away with the Delaney Clause of the 1958 Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act that protects the public from exposure to substances known to cause cancer. The Clinton Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), following in the footsteps of the Bush administration, wants to replace the Delaney prohibitions with the concept of "acceptable risk." (See story on page 20.)

*If you were to give the Clinton administration a grade for its environmental policies, what would it be and why?*

The grade would be "F" and that is because their poli-

cies have not advanced any from the Reagan-Bush years. And the things that they have passed are almost like corporate window dressing.

*What environmental issues do you believe deserve the nation's undivided attention?*

There are three of them. One is how NAFTA and GATT are going to be implemented. What are they going to do to our jobs, to the environment, and to the quality of our food supply? Chemicals that have been banned in this country will now be permitted in. People are going to be eating stuff with DDT, which was banned many years ago in the United States.

Second is Superfund. It has become one of the hottest issues, at least in the D.C. area. The Clinton administration's plans for Superfund are horrible. Some of the stuff that Clinton proposes, like proportionate funding—that's deciding who is responsible for what portion of a Superfund site—is not going to avoid the issue of the money going to lawyers and consulting firms. From everything that I hear of what has been done, Clinton's proposal is going to increase the number of lawyers—and that is going to decrease the action at the Superfund sites. So instead of resolving the Superfund issue, it is going to create more problems.

The third one is pesticides. EPA Administrator Carol Browner is a firm advocate of trying to abolish the Delaney Clause and in its place put risk assessment. People will be subjected to food in which there are chemicals that cause cancer.

*And children and unborn babies are particularly at risk.*

Absolutely. The National Academy of Sciences released a report last July that said that "one-size-fits-all risk assessments" are not adequate for protecting children. Pregnant women and small children are more susceptible to small doses of chemicals than are adults who weigh 160 pounds—the weight they are basing risk assessments on.

*What is CCHW working on now?*

We are working on the campaign to save Delaney. We are going to muster consumer support and membership support to make sure that Delaney does not get abolished, but stays in place, and that new legislation is passed that expands Delaney to cover raw food and vegetables.

*Does your campaign have a specific tactic?*

We're going to target Dole Foods. Dole Foods has sent

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They did trade their integrity. But it's questionable how much integrity they had from the beginning.

*Why do you say that?*

Because on many issues they have had the wrong position. People in the grass-roots justice movement and people in the labor movement were all saying no to NAFTA. Some based their opposition on jobs and the economy. Some of the opposition was based on environmental and health issues. The Big 10, with the exception of the Sierra Club, were all in support of NAFTA, vocally so.

Last year, one of our organizers went to meet the organizer from the National Wildlife Federation (NWF). The NWF organizer said that he was told by his executive director to go find some people in the grass roots that support NAFTA. He said that after two months of searching, he was unable to find one. How can a national group that is supposed to be the representative of the people who care about the environment, who care about wildlife, who care about public health, take a position on which they can't even find one environmentalist to support them?

The Big 10 position of going in and compromising would not be so horrible if those groups were somehow connected to the grass roots. The problem is that they do it in total isolation from the grass-roots movement. Their tactics are not bad—that is the only way you can operate on Capitol Hill.

me a letter saying that they have to use pesticides in order for us to have an abundant food supply—so that Americans can have their “five fresh fruits and vegetables a day.” But that means that Americans will have to eat five different chemicals a day to achieve that goal. It is totally outrageous. We're asking people to call Dole on their 1-800 number, which is on the back of all their cans (1-800-232-8888), and to tell Dole that they are not going to buy their products because their products are going to have cancer-causing chemicals in them.

*The leadership of the Big 10 came down firmly in support of NAFTA. Do you agree, as some have said, that the national environmental organizations have traded their integrity for their newfound access to the White House?*

But there are two kinds of power in this country—one is money and one is people. And the truth is that grass-roots movements are much more successful. If you look at the history of things that have passed on the Hill over the last 10-year period, you can see that most of these victories were grass-roots based. And it is the grass-roots movement building locally and then on the national level that is going to change society.

*What are the environmental movement's recent victories?*

You know there hasn't been a new commercial hazardous waste landfill built in this country since 1978. Why is that? It is because the grass-roots movement won't allow it. And those in the grass-roots movement are so successful

because they go to their elected officials, they stand arm in arm at the local level, saying: "No. We will not take this. We will not tolerate it anymore. There is a better way. And here's the way—and you've got to do it."

The key to change, whether it's source reduction, whether it's Superfund, whether it's pesticides in our food, change is going to happen at the local level with people working locally and independently, but collectively.

One of the really powerful things about the grass-roots movement is that people maintain their own autonomy. People come to their own conclusions and work in their own communities. And, therefore, the polluters cannot circumvent or co-opt the movement as they have done in so many other cases.

*What is the difference between working at the grass-roots level and working in Washington? Does Washington have a corrupting influence?*

Washington corrupts because people are here for a profession. They are here to climb the ladder, to someday get a job in the administration, to someday get a job in some big consulting firm or law firm, or to someday rise within the organization in which they work. They put policy issues on the table and they argue them professionally. They do not argue them as if they are based on real-life situations.

Grass-roots groups on the other hand have everything at stake; they have very little to lose. They are not doing it because they want a profession. They are doing it because their life is at stake. They have got to win this victory. They have got to shut down that incinerator. They have got to clean up the dump. And they are willing to go to extremes in order to do that.

*Is it accurate to say that the Big 10 environmental groups have been leery of flexing their political muscle and actively supporting congressional candidates?*

I've always thought they were pretty good at endorsing the status quo. Their endorsement doesn't come with conditions—like, we will endorse you, if you do the following. What they do is figure out where the administration is at on a position, and then they endorse that position so they can have access to the White House.

If we in the grass-roots movement were to endorse somebody, then that person would be held accountable. That person would be looked at extremely closely.

The mainstream groups tend to look for someone who is sort of good on the issues, but then they don't hold them accountable. Clinton is a prime example. Every environmental group endorsed Clinton and yet, when it comes to pushing on issues like Superfund or Delaney, they are all backing off, saying we need access to the White House. What good is access to the White House if once you're there you don't say anything?

*Does your faith in grass-roots organizing grow out of your personal experience?*

I was an activist at Love Canal. In the spring of 1978 I started knocking on doors. I was a full-time homemaker at that time. I lived in Niagara Falls, near Love Canal, in the community three blocks from the dump.

Our experience at Love Canal shows that we can do anything. People organized at the grass-roots level can go as far as to bring the president of the United States to their community to talk to them. We had Jimmy Carter come down to Love Canal, because he had no choice. People say "You can't fight city hall" and "You can't fight the White House,"... well, Love Canal is a shining example of how untrue those statements are.

*In the waste disposal and chemical industries, are there any corporations that you think stand out as being more responsible than others?*

No. They all have lots of wonderful rhetoric, but I think the reality at the street level is different. You see the Chevron advertisement on TV with the dolphins jumping out of the water and the pelicans flapping their wings. If you go to the Chevron plant in Richmond, Va., or down to one in Louisiana, you see that is not the truth.

I think corporations should be responsible. The problem is that the way our system is established, corporations are always let off the hook, are free of responsibility. At Love Canal, Occidental Petroleum never paid a penny. It never even affected their bottom line. Yet 900 families in Love Canal were terribly disrupted and made sick. Some family members died.

*Were the managers of the plant and the directors of the company ever held responsible?*

Nope. And they never are. If I were to go out and put poison in your drinking water, I'd be put behind bars. I couldn't just say, "Well, I dumped that poison so I could hire three people to distribute the poisons, and therefore it is a jobs issue." The government would put me in jail. Yet a corporation can poison people and the government response is: "This is economics, the company was doing what it thought was right."

In this country, corporations have more rights than individuals.

*What do you think the future holds for your children?*

I think the future looks better. Waste reduction is now happening because we have stopped the cheap disposal options. The public has become aware of the environmental links to consumer products, like the dolphin campaign around tuna fish. Their food products will be much safer than ours. As a result of continual activity by the grass-roots



movement, we will be able to build an economy that provides both jobs and a clean environment. By the time they are old enough to vote, we will be on a path of healing, as opposed to polluting.

*You sound pretty upbeat.*

I am. We work with 8,000 other groups, and in addition to us there are the major parallel groups, the Military Toxics Network and the People of Color Network.

A real indication of the power of the grass-roots movement is the fact that Clinton signed the environmental justice proclamation that was proposed by Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-MN). (See ITT, Aug. 23, 1993.)

What they did was pretty much symbolic. But what it says is that the grass-roots movement has made such a large ruckus about the fact that poor communities have been sacrificed, that the government needs to recognize and deal with this issue.

Ten years ago nobody cared about sacrifice zones—rural poor communities, often communities of color, that are getting all of the dumps, all of the landfills, all of the polluting refineries and industries.

In 1982 we raised this issue through CCHW's newsletter. We were talking about Warren County, N.C. The state had identified this rural, low-income, African-American community to build a dump to hold PCB-contaminated dirt.

We were talking about the State of California Solid Wastes commissioning a survey to identify communities that were least likely to resist having a waste incinerator built. The state discovered that the people least likely to resist an unhealthy, unsafe facility are people in low-income, low-education and Catholic communities. People who are Catholic get angry at that. When I go out and talk, I always say, "I'm not Catholic, would somebody tell me why." And somebody in the audience will always get up and say, "Well, I know, it's because when we're always told to stand up, we stand up."

*Looking at Congress, what legislators do you see as being particularly effective?*

Congress is fickle. Around NAFTA, I thought we were going to win that victory, because Congress was with us up until Clinton made his 32 backroom deals.

Congress is an animal that is subject to who is offering whom a better deal. It's not good guy, bad guy. It's who's

got the votes. Members of Congress are not inherently bad. They are political animals, and if you look at them as political animals then you can figure out how to get them politically on your side. And we have as much power to put them on our side as the other side does—if we exercise that power. Because no matter how many ad campaigns they run in newspapers, no matter how many ads they put on TV, no matter how much money they give to campaign donations, if our folks went out door to door and did a slam campaign on that congressperson, and an upbeat campaign on one of our folks, we would win. All it is, is grass-roots democracy.

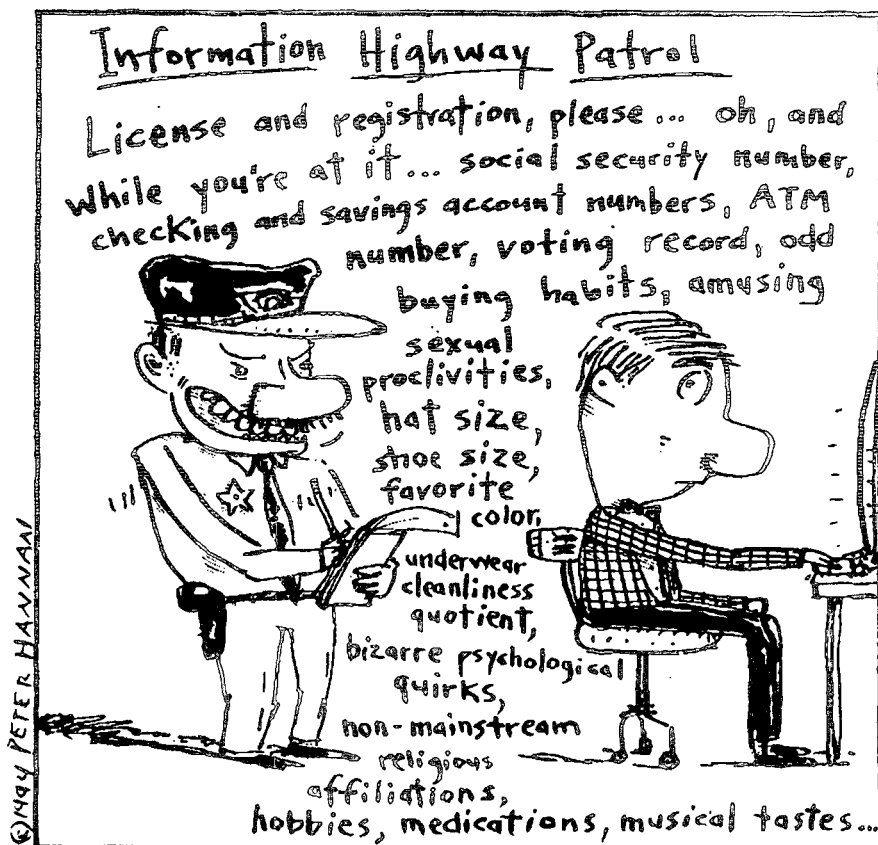
*And you think it is unbeatable?*

Yeah. And this is a democracy. We do have the power; the problem is that they beat us down so much that people feel powerless. I think the challenge for the grass-roots movement is to remove that feeling that you can't fight city hall, that you can't fight the statehouse. We need to let people understand and realize the fact that they are the biggest players in the circle, that they hold that vote—and if they exercise that vote in a positive way then they can control everything.

Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes can be reached at PO Box 6806, Falls Church, VA 22040, (703) 237-2249.

## THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



**E** N V I R O N M E N T

# Up in smoke

# E

ast Liverpool, Ohio, may have the most famous smoke in America. The plume rushes almost invisibly from a lone smokestack at the Waste Technologies Industry (WTI) hazardous waste incinerator and immediately bunches into a thick white cumulus cone. When the burner starts full operation, this smoke will carry such toxic emissions as lead, mercury and dioxin. WTI has permission to pump 7,400 pounds of hazardous waste into the air every year. Much of it will fall back to earth among the homes of East Liverpool.

On the campaign trail in 1992, Al Gore called the WTI incinerator "an unbelievable idea." It sits in the middle of a poor black neighborhood, 300 feet from the nearest home and 1,100 feet from a school on a bluff that happens to be at

smokestack height. Soon after the election, Gore promised a full federal investigation of the WTI facility before the plant was permitted to open.

Environmentalists in East Liverpool and around the nation had good reason for placing hope in Al Gore and the Clinton administration. By the end of his Senate career, Gore ranked at the top of the League of Conservation Voters' annual ratings. The vice president was author of a best-selling environmental book, *Earth In Balance*, in which he blasted solid waste incinerators and professed an admiration for grass-roots environmentalists. He wrote: "The people in a democratic society need to be prepared to hold their elected officials accountable."

Gore wasn't the only administration official who gave environmentalists cause for optimism. Clinton's choice to head the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Carol Browner, had been an activist herself. When she first came to Washington in the early '80s, she worked for two advocacy groups, Clean Water Action and then Citizen Action, where she spent much of her time on toxics issues. (Her husband, Michael Podhorzer,

still works for Citizen Action as a public health specialist.) John O'Connor, the former head of the National Toxics Campaign, remembers her as "one of the smartest people in the country."

But Gore and Browner have betrayed the people of East Liverpool. The incinerator now chugs along with a temporary permit from Browner's EPA, despite the mounting evidence of the facility's dangers. In March 1993, the incinerator failed three of its trial burns, including one that released 29 pounds of mercury into the air. The Ohio attorney general has said that WTI's permits violate state law because of the plant's tangled history of ownership. The EPA's own researchers have estimated that if dioxin released from the smokestack enters the food supply through the local cows and milk it would pose a health risk 130 times above the agency's acceptable level.

Grass-roots environmentalists across the country point to WTI as a symbol that little has changed at the EPA under Browner. She has recused herself from the case because someone at her husband's advocacy group signed a letter against WTI. The final decision now rests with her deputy administrator, Robert Sussman, who came from a law firm that represents the Chemical Manufacturers Association (and who, despite this fact, has not recused *himself*). The EPA regional administrator in Chicago who approved WTI, Valdis Adamkus, a Republican appointee, remains on the job. And the incinerator continues to burn hazardous waste under its temporary permit, while the EPA conducts a new risk assessment that won't be done until the fall. An interim

*Environmentalists' hopes for the Clinton EPA are rapidly disappearing.*

By Will Nixon

review panel recently found that the first assessment missed half of the risk. But Terri Swearingen, a leader of the East Liverpool activists, points out that only explosions and fires have managed to close down hazardous waste incinerators in the past, never the EPA. "In light of the national attention this case has generated, if the EPA fails to stop WTI, given its horrendous location and the fact that it is not safe, not needed, not wanted and illegal," Swearingen says, "then the opportunity to restore credibility and public trust in the EPA will be lost."

To be fair, no one has ever accused the EPA of working. One thorough study of the agency, the first "Annual Review of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency," done last year by the Center for Resource Economics, a Washington think tank, found that "the U.S. has the most comprehensive set of environmental laws in the world," but that the EPA "cannot ensure that American communities and industries are in full compliance with a single federal environmental law."

With pesticides, for example, the EPA has "reassessed only a handful of the approximately 180 pesticides approved for food use" as required by a 1972 law, according to the "Annual Review." The agency also knows that "farm workers suffer up to 300,000 acute illnesses and injuries every year from pesticide exposure." Yet in 1992, after finding 663 violations of pesticide regulations on farm inspection visits, the EPA leveled only 42 fines.

The report also reflects EPA science advisers' contentions that the agency's priorities are scrambled. The agency spends more than half of its money on Superfund cleanups and sewage-treatment plants, while devoting only 1 or 2 percent of its budget to more threatening matters like pesticides, indoor air pollution, radon or workers' exposure to chemicals.

Browner herself ripped the agency before Rep. John Dingell (D-MI) in March 1993. "I am appalled by what I have learned about the EPA's total lack of management, accountability and discipline," she said. "[There were] poor management practices, serious violations of rules and intolerable waste of taxpayers' money."

By now Browner has been at the agency long enough to be judged herself. Sadly, grass-roots activists often list the same three strikes against her.

While the EPA lets WTI burn, Browner also wants to

weaken the Delaney Clause, which prohibits any residues from carcinogenic pesticides from appearing in processed foods. (See story on page 20.) And Browner is proposing to change the liability provisions of the Superfund law for hazardous waste sites.

"If you ask people the single thing that has changed corporate behavior, it's always liability, not green consumerism, federal laws, Earth Day or Greenpeace," says Rick Hind of Greenpeace. The Superfund cleanups may proceed at a snail's pace, but companies have tremendous incentive not to create any new waste sites. If anything, Hind says, Superfund should be revised to include a victims' compensation fund. Instead, Browner has focused on polluters' complaints that the liability provisions force them to spend too much money suing each other and their insurance companies. She proposes that they all meet before private arbitrators who will divvy up the costs. Only those companies that refuse to participate will face the old liability standard. "Saving polluters money is the last thing we want to do," Hind says. "We need more liability, not less."

Browner is "a political hack," says Hugh Kaufman, an EPA whistleblower. Alluding to her earlier jobs with Sens. Gore and Lawton Chiles (D-FL), he adds, "She's still a Hill staffer and always will be." A Hill staffer, he explains, knows how to dodge the hot issues like WTI and likes to split the difference on contentious ones like Superfund.

Congress has responded to the EPA's failings by writing more complicated laws and holding endless hearings to try to whip the agency into shape. (The average number of pages for each law has grown from 50 to 400 over the past decade, and the agency reports to 110 congressional committees and subcommittees.) Groups like the Natural Resource Defense Council and the Environmental Defense Fund have responded with countless legal actions to force the EPA to catch up with its obligations under these laws.

But out in the countryside, where people need the EPA to arrive as a combination SWAT Team and disaster-relief group, the agency's failures have created pockets of rage and protest that many observers have compared to the anti-war movement of the '60s. In an editorial about East Liverpool, for example, the *National Catholic Reporter* claimed that "the environmental issue—if ordinary people continue to be affected—is going to become a domestic 'Vietnam' issue. It will radicalize people who ordinarily are anything but."



Carol Browner



Carol Browner ran into this rage on February 11 at the Crystal City Marriott outside the nation's capital. About 1,200 people—half from community groups, half from federal agencies—had gathered for a symposium on health and environmental justice. When she took the podium to give her keynote address, some of the activists booed or walked out.

Anna Marie Stenberg of Fort Bragg, Calif., listened politely until Browner began promoting the administration's pesticide reform initiative. "What about the Delaney Clause?" Stenberg interrupted. It was not an idle question. Stenberg worked with migrant farm laborers as a girl and remembers popping strawberries in her mouth that were white with pesticides. Her mother, grandmother and aunt died from breast cancer. She herself has had 17 miscarriages.

After her, almost everyone in the room, it seemed, wanted to tell Browner their heartache and anger and even to show her pictures of their sick or deceased children. An hour later Brown left the podium in tears. "The atmosphere of pain was so thick it would be hard not to be affected by what was said," recalls Robert Bullard, a sociology professor who is a leader of the environmental justice movement.

For now, this sense of outrage brews in small encampments by pollution disaster sites or proposed waste facilities. The broader public still thinks of environmentalism as a mixture of conserving beautiful natural areas and changing wasteful lifestyles through recycling and green consumerism. But that attitude could change.

We may, in fact, be in the thick of an environmental health crisis that goes far beyond the cancer clusters at the front lines. For instance, researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health have estimated that the particles in air pollution from industrial smelters, cars and other sources—while perfectly legal—may be killing 50,000 people a year. The EPA itself has said that 30 million Americans may be drinking tap water with unsafe levels of lead.

In addition, the "Annual Review" notes, "Each year, more than 22,000 industrial facilities release approximately 5.7 billion tons of toxic emissions." As a result, almost all adults have measurable quantities of dioxin, PCBs, DDE (a byproduct of DDT) and other dangerous chemicals in our body fat. "The exposure has taken its toll. Since 1950, the incidence of cancer in the U.S. has risen 42 percent, and the prevalence of asthma rose nearly 30 percent between 1980 and 1987."

Even breast milk has become a hazardous substance. "Based on current breast milk concentrations nationwide, it is estimated that at least 5 percent and possibly more of the babies born in the United States are exposed to quantities of PCBs sufficient to cause neurological effects," reports Theo Colborn in the October 1993 issue of *Environmental Health Perspectives* from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. Researchers like Colborn are exploring the ways that pesticides and industrial chemicals may mimic or corrupt our hormonal

systems, perhaps causing sexual abnormalities and breast cancer. (See *In These Times*, March 7.)

In the same journal, Devra Lee Davis, Mary Wolf and others review the work on breast cancer. "In one study," they write, "the breast fat of women with cancer at biopsy had about 40 percent more of some chlorinated pesticides such as metabolites of DDT and elevated levels of PCB. ... Women who work in the chemical industry or who live near hazardous waste sites are also reported to have higher rates of breast cancer."

In the face of such threats, Browner "needs a more imaginative approach," according to Greenpeace's Hind. "As Ralph Nader says, 'Think big. Think fundamental.' A lot of overachievers come to Washington and rise to the highest levels, but they leave as underachievers."

Other major groups don't take such a harsh view of Browner. Granted, she lost time in her first year because most of her top administrators and regional directors didn't reach office until the past few months. (Some top posts still aren't filled.) But they like her appointments and see her as a bright policy wonk who should flourish in this administration.

Browner's supporters point out that she won a 13 percent hike in the EPA's operating budget in Clinton's proposals for fiscal year 1995, a complete reversal of the agency's 1 percent cutback last year. The agency will also be able to hire 793 people to replace some of the outside contractors who have given the EPA such a black eye in the past with their fraud and abuse.

"This is great news," says Ralph De Gennaro of Friends of the Earth. "Last year she was too much the good soldier. This year she went into the room with the president and fought for her budget. It shows that she's getting savvy to the Washington game."

"The budget is not something to get activists' blood boiling, but it means a lot to us," says Ken Cook of the Center for Resource Economics, the group that publishes the "Annual Review." His organization's harsh critique of the EPA returns again and again to the lack of money and people to carry out the law. "I think she's getting better and better at her job," he says.

Browner has taken several out-of-the-spotlight steps that impress environmentalists. Reagan dispersed the EPA's enforcement division out to the regional offices, effectively crippling it; Browner has reorganized it back in Washington, D.C. With a sympathetic White House, she has also been able to issue regulations that her predecessor, William Reilly, could not get finished. In early March, for example, the EPA announced a Chemical Manufacturing Rule, which forces the industry to cut its toxic air emissions by 88 percent over the next three years. And the administration announced that it would ratify the Basel Convention, which bans international trade in hazardous waste.

After her heartwrenching appearance before the activists, Browner went to the White House, where Clinton signed an executive order on environmental justice for minorities and

low-income communities. "It's an excellent order," Bullard says. "It's not just another piece of paper." Environmental-impact statements, for example, will now consider social impacts based on ethnic data. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which ensures that federal funds aren't spent on discriminatory projects, will now be applied to environmental matters.

But then, Bullard adds, the EPA hasn't hired any more people of color to top positions than it did under George Bush. "We keep getting mixed messages," he says. "I'd have to give Browner a B-minus."

Whether she proves to be a good bureaucrat or not, Browner and her bosses thus far seem unwilling to alter the fundamental orientation of the EPA. The agency is accustomed to working with industry and other government agencies—but it has a poor record in its relations with the general public. If there's any hope for reform, says toxics activist Stenberg, "affected communities have to have an equal place at the table."

Adds EPA whistleblower William Sanjour, "Our regulatory laws need to be rethought to put as much authority as possible into the hands of people affected."

Until then, activists in East Liverpool and hundreds of other communities must be their own "Citizens' Protection Agency." As Sanjour says, the EPA has certainly trained them well in what our country needs that the government doesn't provide.

Will Nixon, an editor at *E* magazine, writes regularly for *In These Times*.

## Socialist Scholars Conference

*The Chickens Come Home to Roost:  
The Price of Neoliberalism*

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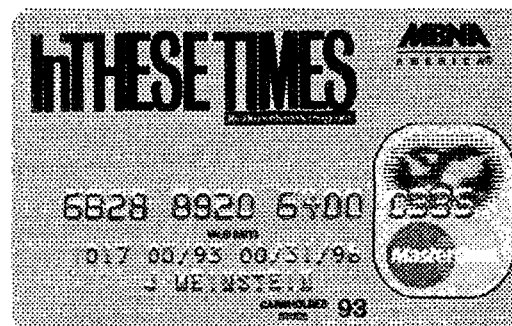
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**E N V I R O N M E N T**

# Risky business

U

nder the guise of pesticide reform, the Clinton administration is aiming to overturn the only law that entitles Americans to a carcinogen-free food supply.

*A proposed EPA reform may leave Americans even more exposed to the dangers of pesticides.*

The administration wants to get rid of the Delaney Clause, a law that for 36 years has threatened, but rarely hampered, the multibillion-dollar pesticide industry. In 1958, Rep. James Delaney (D-NY) insisted that the Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act include language that prohibits cancer-causing chemicals in America's processed food. Under Delaney, if a pesticide is shown to be a carcinogen, the government must ban it from use in all processed foods.

The Delaney Clause does not apply to fresh fruit and vegetables. And even in processed foods, industry has often found ways around the law—with the government's help. Nonethe-

less, the Delaney Clause allows the chemical industry far less room to negotiate than any other federal pesticide statute.

When Congress passed Delaney in the '50s minute concentrations of carcinogens were hard to detect, but today scientists can detect chemical residues in parts per billion and trillion. This means that if the government had been actively enforcing Delaney, many pesticides currently in use would be banned. But under Reagan and Bush, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) avoided stringent application of the Delaney Clause by stalling the re-registration of commonly used pesticides.

A year and a half ago, however, the Natural Resources Defense Council won a federal lawsuit that compelled the EPA to begin enforcing Delaney. To avoid doing this—and to appease the chemical industry—the Clinton EPA is proposing a legislative reform package that would replace Delaney with a system known as "risk assessment." Under this system, which is already used to regulate pesticides sprayed on fresh fruit and vegeta-

bles, the government weighs the "risks" posed by a given pesticide against the chemical's "benefits."

The key to the EPA's risk-assessment process is the concept of "negligible risk." To the agency, a risk is negligible if only one in a million consumers develop cancer from a pesticide-treated food.

As *In These Times* went to press, EPA Administrator Carol Browner was set to announce the agency's plan for replacing the Delaney Clause with a negligible risk standard. And two bills are already in Congress that would get rid of Delaney. Pesticide makers and agribusiness lobbyists favor a bill sponsored by Richard Lehman (D-CA) and Thomas Bliley (R-VA), which would ditch Delaney entirely. Another bill, sponsored by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA), would also replace Delaney in the interest of streamlining the EPA's registration of pesticides. But the current draft of the Kennedy-Waxman bill also contains provisions for phasing out the spraying of all pesticides classified as "known carcinogens" and "probable carcinogens."

Even under the Kennedy-Waxman legislation, however, pesticides classified as "possible carcinogens" could still be approved for use. So once the Delaney Clause becomes history, the right of U.S. agribusiness to spread cancer will be secured. Congress and the EPA will be left to squabble over how many cancer deaths are too many.

Environmentalists fear that the EPA is too quick to trade a little bit of cancer for a lot of broccoli. They claim that the EPA's risk-assessment process is a combination of science fiction and pesticide makers' wishful thinking, and that it should not be extended to regulate the processed

By William K. Burke



foods that fall under the Delaney Clause. Instead, the green lobby wants to see the Delaney concept expanded to include all pesticide uses.

"Delaney is the building block to a sound public policy to prevent cancer," says Jay Feldman of the National Coalition Against Misuse of Pesticides. In fact, Feldman and other environmentalists argue, the need for stringent restriction of cancer-causing agents has never been greater. They point to a recent study by epidemiologist Devra Lee Davis of the Department of Health and Human Services. The report, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, shows that a white male born during the baby boom is twice as likely to contract cancer as a white male born in the 1890s. Further, women born in the '50s are 2.7 times more likely to contract breast cancer than their grandmothers were. Says Feldman, "It's a mess out there, and risk assessment has not controlled the mess."

Americans regularly consume the residues of more than 300 EPA-registered pesticides—about 70 of which are known to cause cancer. Yet the risk-assessment process falsely assumes that ill effects from exposure to a single toxin from a single source can be precisely calculated and then regulated.

For example, under risk assessment a typical American, weighing 160 pounds, is assumed to eat a typical number of fresh tomatoes treated with a standard amount of the carcinogen permethrin. As long as the EPA calculates that those tomatoes will not cause cancer in more than one consumer in 1 million, permethrin retains its EPA registration for use on fresh tomatoes.

But this risk assessment ignores the fact that the causes of cancer can't be pinpointed that exactly. In fact, a typical American already runs a one-in-four risk of cancer—a risk that includes the daily dose of carcinogens they get from their salads.

The risk-assessment process also ignores the possible increased risk from ingesting the dizzying combinations of carcinogens in the average American's environment. And it overlooks multiple exposures to a single pesticide that has a wide variety of uses. Because of these inevitable gaps in the data, environmentalists believe risk assessments of isolated pesticides give the EPA a false sense of security.

"The question is whether the government should be involved in risk assessment," Feldman says.

Food and Drug Administration Deputy Director Robert Scheuplein says that government regulators lose the integrity and objectivity of their science when they use the EPA's one-in-a-million standard to dismiss the exposure risks of a carcinogen. "We have not seen a breakthrough that permits the precise assessment of low-level cancer risks," Scheuplein wrote.

Environmentalists want Browner to extend the principle behind the Delaney Clause and eliminate this cost-benefit approach to toxins in all food. They fear the administration's

pesticide reform plan will use the science fiction of risk assessment to preserve the myth that widespread pesticide use is essential to a secure food supply.

Since Rachel Carson's first warnings about DDT, the pesticide industry has repeatedly howled that banning carcinogens on food would destroy the American way of food production. Yet consumer groups and environmentalists have forced the EPA to ban DDT, Alar and many other pesticides. Somehow, supermarkets have remained full.

"We have seen the mythology surrounding the use of pesticides shattered by the experience of organic farmers," Feldman says.

Two National Academy of Science (NAS) studies in the last five years have shown that reducing pesticide use benefits farmers economically and reduces toxic exposure.

In *Alternative Agriculture* (1989), the NAS found that farmers who had reduced their reliance on chemical pesticides and fertilizers saved money. In *Harvest of Hope* (1991), three NAS researchers reported that so-called integrated pest management (IPM) practices such as crop rotation could reduce pesticide use 25 to 80 percent in nine major U.S. crops.

The EPA's Al Heier claims the Clinton pesticide reform plan will encourage IPM and ban the most dangerous pesticides in current use. But Feldman says without a strong federal stand against spraying carcinogens on food crops, IPM could turn out to be little more than a buzzword masking continued pesticide dependency.

Without strong, unequivocal laws to guide it, the EPA has tended to negotiate with polluters rather than regulate their pollution. By proposing to replace the Delaney Clause with the dubious science of risk assessment, the Clinton EPA risks repeating that sorry history.

William K. Burke writes regularly for *In These Times* on environmental issues.



**HEALTH CARE**

# Second opinion

O

*A former proponent of Clinton's managed-competition plan offers a new diagnosis.*

By John B. Judis  
WASHINGTON D.C.

One month after Bill Clinton was elected, I was invited to a seminar held for liberal health care lobbyists. The event's speakers were Princeton sociologist Paul Starr and Walter Zelman, an aide to California Insurance Commissioner John Garamendi. Starr and Zelman argued convincingly that proponents of a single-payer Canadian-style reform could achieve their goals of universal coverage, cost control and equal access to care through a version of "managed competition"—one that, in Zelman's words, emphasized "management" rather than "competition."

A single-payer plan, Starr and Zelman contended, would never be supported either by the Clinton administration or by Congress, because it violated the two great taboos of post-

New Deal American politics: it created a new public bureaucracy and raised taxes. Managed competition could accomplish the same ends without incurring the curse of statism. It could be run through quasi-public purchasing cooperatives (later dubbed "alliances") and funded through payroll taxes, which could be described as premiums.

Starr and Zelman also maintained that managed competition was more appropriate to the United States in the '90s than a Canadian-style system was. When Canada adopted its reforms in the '60s, most Canadian medicine operated on a traditional "fee-for-service" basis. But in the United States, more than half of all medicine is provided through health maintenance organizations (HMOs) and preferred-provider plans. Instead of abolishing these new kinds of health care delivery, reformers could use them to achieve greater efficiencies than would be available under fee-for-service.

Starr and Zelman ended up on Hillary Rodham Clinton's health task force, and Starr drafted the original plan that the White House released in September. The plan was essentially what Starr and Zelman described at that seminar.

Since the fading days of the new left, I've been allergic to political crusades that had little chance of reaching their destination. Tell me that a program will solve all the world's problems but is not likely to win support outside of Madison, Wis., and I'll quickly lose interest in it. I was therefore initially sympathetic to Starr and Zelman's dismissal of single-payer reform and to the version of managed competition that they offered in its place. (See *In These Times*, Nov. 30, 1992.) I didn't really look hard at the Clinton program again until last month, when, just for the hell of it, I tried to figure out how much my wife and I, who are self-employed with two children, would pay for health insurance under its provisions.

It took me an entire day and repeated phone calls to experts at think tanks, but what I finally discovered was disturbing. Under the Clinton plan, we would have to pay about twice as much for health insurance as we do now to Maryland Blue Cross. We'd also be stuck in an HMO or other managed-care facility—unless we wanted to pay still more. By contrast, your average CEO, making \$750,000 a year, would probably pay about a fourth less for insurance.

Of course, I would never argue that because the bill was bad for me, it was necessarily bad for the country. Still, after seeing how I was going to get screwed, I began to look more closely at how the Clinton plan would actually work. What I discovered was not reassuring.

Take the program's funding. Tax accountants will love the plan's payroll-tax provisions, because such taxes add

enormous complexity to the program. Separate tax schedules exist for different size businesses, different wages, different family arrangements, part-time workers, the self-employed and part-owners who pay themselves a salary.

Some people make out well, such as part-time salaried workers who don't now have health insurance through their job, but others would get the shaft. Small businesses, for instance, are supposed to get their payroll taxes subsidized, so they can still compete with larger businesses—but in fact the plan only subsidizes businesses whose average wage is less than \$24,000. A small fast-food joint does OK; but a small software firm gets nailed.

The plan also contains perverse incentives. The current health system makes employers who provide health insurance less likely to hire people who are older and have pre-existing conditions. True, Clinton's plan would eliminate that kind of discrimination. But it would also encourage employers to hire single people rather than married people with children, because firms would have to pay less for single people.

If there were no alternative to payroll taxes, then perhaps Clinton could be justified in using them to pay for his plan. There is, however, an obvious alternative: to fund the program through income taxes or Social Security taxes. Such a funding system would trigger a period of economic adjustment while workers who were receiving health insurance bid up their wages, but in the end, it would treat everyone equally and would sever the link between employment and the right to health care.

Starr and Zelman argued that raising taxes explicitly would destroy any possibility the program had of passage. But the administration's claim that payroll taxes are really premiums is nothing but a ruse—and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has already exposed it as just that.

Starr and Zelman also argued that routing health care through the health alliances would avoid charges of big government, but few on Capitol Hill, including the CBO, have bought that argument. Under the Clinton plan, the proposed alliances would become enormous new public bureaucracies that would negotiate contracts, collect premiums, oversee the quality of care, furnish consumers with information about plans and determine who is eligible for subsidized care. Overall, private and public administrative costs would probably increase under the Clinton plan.

The administration's program might eventually eliminate the one element besides universal coverage that is most important to the public: choice of doctors. Clinton claims that everyone will be offered an option of fee-for-service medicine, but it will be more expensive. And with a great preponderance of people signed up for managed-care plans, doctors and other health workers will have to follow the cost and care guidelines set up by insurance executives. Gone will be the craft of medicine and the doctor-patient relationship, which may be unimportant for open-heart surgery but is essential to a good pediatric or family practice.

I respect Starr and Zelman's argument—echoed now by administration spokesmen—that the American system has already evolved toward managed care. But the Clinton plan—or even worse, the plan of Rep. Jim Cooper (D-TN)—would hasten that trend and accentuate its worst factory-like aspects. Moving toward a Canadian-style system would be more likely to arrest the trend, allowing Americans different kinds of alternatives.

Few Americans, of course, fully understand how the Clinton plan works. I certainly don't. But they do understand that the plan is unnecessarily complex and would threaten their ability to choose their own doctor. The more the plan is exposed to light, the more these doubts will deepen. I now class myself among these doubters. And I would argue that—politics aside—a plan modeled strictly on the Canadian system would be far preferable: it would reduce administrative costs and the irrationalities and inequities that payroll taxes foster, and preserve some measure of the traditional relationship between physician and patient.

But while I now disagree with the conclusion of Starr and Zelman's argument, I still agree with its premise. I am no more convinced now than I was a year ago that a Canadian-style plan could pass Congress—even the watered-down version (based on a payroll tax) sponsored by Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-MN) and Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA). The public is simply too averse to new taxes and to the broad expansion of governmental power. If the public debate is now moving in any direction, it is away from the Canadian and Clinton plans toward the more limited plans put forward by Cooper and the Republicans, which do not provide universal access or control costs.

Where does that leave a well-meaning liberal or progressive? Just about where they, and we, were during the debate over the first Clinton budget. The situations are strikingly similar. In that case, genuine reform depended on the acceptance of new taxes and new governmental power; but the public, prodded by the Republican opposition, balked. It wasn't just what opinion polls said. Last year Clinton and his party lost five major elections in which voters associated the Democrats with a willingness to raise taxes. Clinton and Democrats were finally forced to limit their objectives to reducing the deficit and preserving what existed of public investment.

It looks like the same thing is happening in the health care debate. As Congress strips away the ungainly features of Clinton's plan, including the payroll taxes and health alliances, the real danger is that what remains will more closely resemble the prim Cooper plan than the feisty Wellstone alternative. Given that danger, liberals' priority will probably be defending what the Clinton plan, for all its deficiencies, has in common with the Canadian system: a commitment to universal coverage and control of costs.

What will I do? I'll have to demonstrate my altruism by defending the Clinton plan against its conservative rivals, even as I anticipate the prospect of my health insurance fees doubling.



**POLITICS**

# Drawing the line

W

*Challenges to congressional redistricting leave the Voting Rights Act under attack.*

By Salim Muwakkil

hen the Voting Rights Act passed in 1965 there were only 280 black elected officials in the entire country; last year there were more than 8,000. This enormous growth is one of this era's few African-American success stories. But a 1993 Supreme Court ruling threatens these gains by undermining the logic upon which they are based. Armed with that ruling, opponents in several states have filed lawsuits challenging many of those electoral gains.

Issued last June, the *Shaw v. Reno* ruling challenged the constitutionality of a congressional district in North Carolina that was configured to assure a black majority and thus the probable election of a black representative. The district, which zig-zags in a thin ribbon connecting black population centers across the state, was challenged by

white opponents who claimed that the redistricting process was a form of "racial gerrymandering" that created a special entity based entirely on race. The state argued that the district had an urban identity that transcended race and that the strange shape was an attempt to conform to federal dictates that encouraged increased black representation.

Writing for the majority, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor said the district "bears an uncomfortable resemblance to political apartheid." She insisted that race-conscious efforts to aid aggrieved minorities be subjected to the same constitutionally stringent standards as racist measures against minorities. "Racial gerrymandering, even for remedial purposes, may Balkanize us into competing racial factions," she wrote, using the terminology cited in the suit.

This is an argument with wide implications. Since the Voting Rights Act clearly stipulates race-conscious remedies for past deprivation, O'Connor's words hinted that the Voting Rights Act itself may violate the Constitution. Although she refused to be more explicit, lower courts and assorted litigants

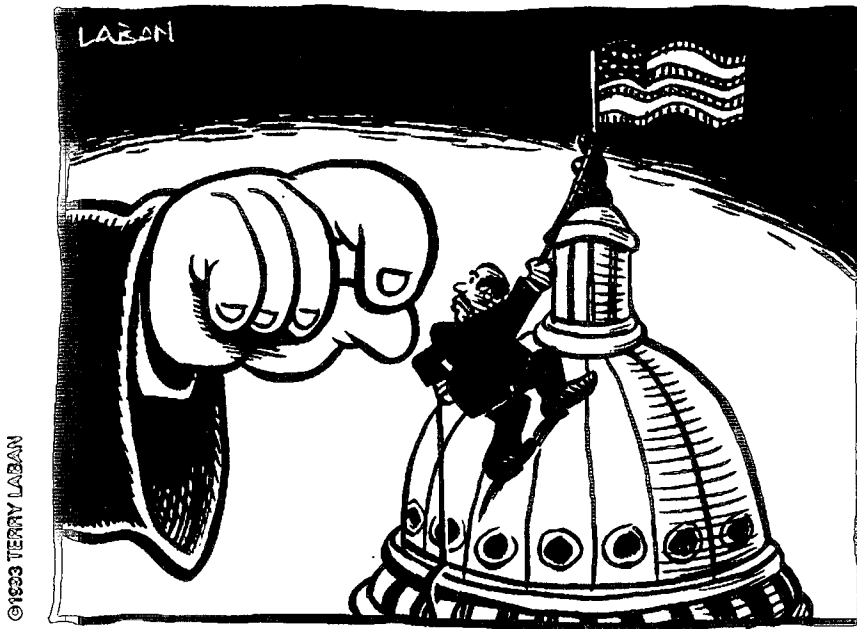
have seized on the dramatic implications of her "racial apartheid" comments and are off and running.

Opponents in North Carolina filed suit in U.S. District Court last month to invalidate the district by the May 3 primary election. Their lawsuit is scheduled for trial on March 28. Because of the *Shaw* ruling, virtually every minority district in the country is now vulnerable to similar constitutional challenges. And there already have been a host of such challenges.

A three-judge federal panel in Shreveport, La., rejected Louisiana's Fourth Congressional District, saying that the entity was a product of racial gerrymandering. The 63 percent black district was created in 1991 to improve the prospects of a black candidate. Georgia's redistricted 11th District has been challenged in a lawsuit alleging that the district "is so irrational on its face that it can only be understood as an effort to segregate voters into separate voting districts because of their race."

Lawsuits have been filed against congressional districts in Texas and Florida. All four districts are represented by first-time black members of Congress; the percentage of African-American representatives in Congress is now closer to the proportion of blacks in the nation's total population than at any other time in history. African-Americans comprise about 12 percent of the U.S. population, and with the redistricted elections, there are now 39 black representatives among the 435 representatives in Congress.

The Clinton administration has decided to join the state of Georgia in defending itself against the redistricting lawsuit. And at the same time, the Justice Department has sought court permission to take part as a friend of the court to oppose challenges to redistricting in North Carolina and



Texas. "This department is committed to protecting minority rights gains that were achieved through redistricting after the 1990 census," Attorney General Janet Reno has explained.

Following the 1990 census, North Carolina had proposed to create one congressional district with a black majority, but the Republicans in Bush's Justice Department prodded the state's General Assembly to create two instead. According to many black activists in North Carolina, the legislature could easily have carved out a minority-heavy district in the southeastern part of the state, but it would have encroached upon the power base of Democratic incumbents.

Instead, they decided to craft the serpentine, razor-thin 12th District. The district is now represented by Mel Watt, a black lawyer serving his first term as a Democratic member of Congress. Rep. Eva Clayton (D-NC) was elected to the other district. Though the population of the state is 22 percent black, Watt and Clayton are the only black members of Congress from North Carolina to have been elected since 1901.

The Bush administration pushed hard for the 1992 redistricting in North Carolina, as well as in several other Southern states. It was good for the Republican Party because the new configurations acted to segregate black voters into a few black districts that invariably would vote Democratic, while creating many more white districts that presumably would vote Republican. The party's successful race-baiting tactics already had transformed the white South into GOP country and, Republicans figured, the newly drawn race-based districts would serve to accelerate that process.

The struggle over redistricting is in some sense a struggle over the legitimacy of the Voting Rights Act itself. The act (especially after it was amended in 1982) was designed to give minorities the power to challenge election systems throughout the country by focusing on discriminatory

results rather than on discriminatory intentions. The amendment enabled the law to serve as a real vehicle for increased minority representation.

In the Supreme Court ruling, O'Connor argued that the problem with the 12th District is that it looks bizarre and therefore appears to segregate voters on the basis of race. She didn't extend the logic to argue that it violated the Constitution by segregating based on race, but that the racial considerations that have so distorted the dimensions of the 12th District may be unconstitutional.

O'Connor repeatedly noted her aesthetic distaste for the district's dimensions, using words like "tortured," "dramatically irregular ... bizarre and irrational" to describe Rep. Watt's home turf. She failed to note that such weirdly shaped constructions are not at all unusual.

It's the court ruling that's truly bizarre, says David Bositis, senior researcher at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a Washington research group that specializes in issues affecting African-Americans. "The Supreme Court's ruling was very irrational in its logic and in its use of the 14th Amendment," he says. "What the court has said is that the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution—an amendment created specifically to guarantee the rights of former slaves—can no longer be used to guarantee any black rights, but instead should be used to guarantee white rights."

Bositis is one of many analysts interpreting the Shaw ruling as a serious blow not only to the logic of the amended Voting Rights Act, but ultimately to other kinds of compensatory race-conscious strategies. And since those strategies have formed the logical foundation of the movement for racial equity, their looming illegitimacy is occasion for serious analysis.

What is needed are new and compelling arguments to legitimize compensatory programs. For if the Supreme Court continues its march away from historical context, the prospects for a real repair of racism's social damage remain remote.

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# Unsettlements

*Israeli  
indulgence  
toward the  
settlers laid the  
groundwork  
for the Hebron  
massacre.*

By Joseph Levine

**T**

he recent massacre of Palestinians by Baruch Goldstein, an American-born fundamentalist Jewish settler, highlights the contradictions inherent in the "peace process" that began in Madrid and was revived in Oslo. A lasting peace can only be built on a genuine recognition of the legitimate demands of both sides.

Unfortunately, the peace process has been employed as another weapon in the Israeli arsenal, the aim continuous with long-held policies—to control the vital resources of the West Bank, to maintain a large Jewish presence there and to retain an expanded Jerusalem.

A serious attempt to meet legitimate Palestinian interests would have involved the following elements, at a minimum: a complete release of Palestinian prisoners, along with a declaration of amnesty; disarming and defunding the

settlers; immediate cessation of military action against Palestinian activists; and a clear-cut commitment to the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state in all of the West Bank and Gaza.

Instead, since the historic White House ceremony last September, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and other political leaders have repeatedly confirmed their opposition to Palestinian statehood. Few prisoners have been released, and promised releases are being used as a means to extort additional Palestinian concessions. Rabin's policy has been one of indulgence toward the settlers and a strong arm toward Palestinians.

It is hardly surprising that Hebron was the site of the recent massacre. Tension has been near the breaking point there for quite a while. Since the September signing settlers have carried out systematic attacks against Palestinians and their property, totally disrupting commerce and normal life. Not only does the Israeli military not punish the attackers, it places the victims under curfew, thus compounding their misery. In the Old

City of Hebron, according to a recent report of the Israeli Hebron Solidarity Committee, settlers have wreaked so much havoc that more than 70 percent of the Palestinian residents have been forced to move to other parts of the city. Even before Goldstein's attack, at least 10 Palestinians in Hebron had died from Israeli military and settler violence during this period.

Upon his election, Rabin declared a reorientation of Israeli funding priorities, away from the Likud policy of heavy investment in the construction and maintenance of settlements. But the reality has not matched the declaration. Rabin explicitly excluded from the cuts East Jerusalem, which, by international consensus and law, is occupied territory. His government has heartily endorsed the goal of creating a Jewish majority in East Jerusalem, and he has steadfastly maintained that his government has no intention of ever allowing Palestinian control there. And even in the rest of the West Bank and Gaza, there is scant evidence of substantial cuts. The Rabin government continues to pay for the gasoline, the public address systems and the communications equipment used by the settlers to demonstrate against and obstruct the peace process. Settler local councils, which represent 2.4 percent of the Israeli population, receive 12 percent of the funding for municipal budgets. As a result of this largesse, almost half of the settlers are employed by the government; among the more militant religious settlers, the figure is closer to 70 percent.

More concrete evidence of Israel's plans for the settlements and their role in the future relationship with Palestinians was presented recently in a joint statement of four Palestinian human rights organizations at a Jerusalem press con-





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### Armed Jewish settlers in Hebron.

ference. They noted that in the last four months of 1993 the Israeli government expropriated more than 46,000 dunums (11,500 acres) of West Bank land, mostly along the Green Line demarcating Israel's pre-1967 borders, and allowed the expansion of settlements on 1,025 dunums (256 acres)—causing the uprooting of more than 5,000 fruit trees. Considered in this context, Israel's stalling over the implementation of the autonomy accord takes on new, more menacing meaning. The Palestine Geographic Research and Information Center concludes that such extensive expropriation hardly "reflect[s] an Israeli intention to withdraw from the Occupied Territories."

There might seem to be a contradiction between the Rabin government's solicitation of settlers' interests and his desire to make the accord work. But, in fact, the two policies are intimately related. Israel's decision to deal with the PLO must be understood in terms of three developments: the weakness and division of the Arab world following the Gulf War; the dissolution of the Soviet Union; and the accelerating globalization of capital, as represented by agreements such as NAFTA. Israel, as the most technologically advanced industrial society in the Middle East, could benefit heavily from the globalization of the economy—but only if it is able to end hostilities with its neighbors and to penetrate their markets. To do this, Israel needs to resolve the Palestinian problem; and only a deal with the PLO will give this resolution the legitimacy it needs.

But in return for granting the PLO legitimacy and officially recognizing Palestinian existence for the first time, the Israelis plan to use their control over an expanded Jerusalem and over the corridors dividing Palestinian cantons ("autonomous" areas) as a means of access to the lucrative trade with the Arab world. As Jan de Jong, a geographer

who is an expert on planning and resource control in the West Bank, explains: "The corridors are the bridges to the Arab world ... Israel has bought [by signing with the PLO] its access to the Arab world." De Jong argues that the long-term effect of current Israeli plans will be a stunted Palestinian economic development and the ultimate "transfer" of a good part of the population of the West Bank due to a lack of economic opportunity.

As usual, a good part of the problem lies in Washington, which continues to support Israeli intransigence. In fact, the Clinton administration has taken this support to new extremes. For instance, where all previous

administrations referred to the West Bank and Gaza as "occupied territories," this administration calls them "disputed territories," thus lending crucial diplomatic support to Israeli attempts to hold on to as much as they can.

As of this writing, the ultimate effect of the massacre on the negotiations is still unclear. The PLO is calling for a complete disarmament of the settlers and an international peace-keeping force to protect Palestinians. Rabin has agreed to disarm "the most militant" settlers, has arrested a few leaders of Kach, the movement of which Goldstein was a member, and has agreed to unarmed international observers.

Meanwhile, Palestinians continue to be shot during demonstrations, and the violence has reached unprecedented levels. Of course, all this could blow over. The PLO, which has always made the crucial concessions in the past, may do so again.

Whatever happens in the immediate future, to truly salvage the peace process it is necessary to change its dynamic from one of continuation of conflict by other means to one of genuine reconciliation. In order for this to happen, Israel must begin to treat the Palestinians as true partners in a reciprocal and egalitarian relationship and must commit itself to fulfilling at least the minimal requirements for authentic Palestinian national development. Those of us who support Palestinian rights must continue to insist that any aid to Israel be made contingent on this change of attitude. ▴

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Much of the source material for this article comes from Israel Shahak Reports, available over Internet from the Jerusalem One Network, and two periodicals, *The Other Front* and *News From Within*, published by the Alternative Information Center, POB 31417, Jerusalem, Israel.

# H O L O C A U S T

*In this age of mass media, history lessons are increasingly taught on the silver screen. Schindler's List—sure to dominate the March 21 Academy Awards—has become many Americans' primary point of reference on the Holocaust. The following two essays explore the dynamic between Steven Spielberg's largely fictional epic and the historical events on which the film is based.*

## Schindler's List and the politics of remembrance

By Richard Wolin

With the opening of the Holocaust museum last year in Washington, D.C. (an institution fashionably derided as a "Holocaust theme park" in European circles), and Steven Spielberg's powerful film *Schindler's List*, the Holocaust has once again become newsworthy.

It wasn't always so. At Nuremberg, Nazi higher-ups (all 22 of them) were brought to trial both for launching an "imperialist war of aggression" as well as the better known charge of "crimes against humanity." In neither indictment, however, did Hitler's genocidal assault against European Jews—which cost the lives of two-thirds of European Jewry and one-third of world Jewry—figure explicitly. And should one visit Auschwitz today, nowhere will one find reference to the fact that the primary, though in no way exclusive, targets of the Nazi extermination process were the European Jews.

More than any other event in the postwar era, it was probably the 1961 Eichmann trial in Jerusalem that focused world attention on Hitler's notorious *Endlösung*, or Final Solution to the Jewish question.

But of equal importance over the years have been a number of cultural events and spectacles that have stirred popular awareness concerning what was historically unprecedented about the Holocaust: that Hitler's Germany put into effect a plan to negate the existence of an entire people.

The annals of history are replete with brutal massacres and exterminations, often bordering on genocide. As a rule, however, most of these—from the Roman sack of Carthage to the Crusades to the more recent genocidal carnage of Stalin and Pol Pot—were at least tangentially related to strategic and political goals.

The Holocaust broke definitively with the terms of earlier human history. In the words of Trotsky biographer Isaac Deutscher, all of these earlier crimes possessed some "human logic." But it was precisely such logic that was absent from the Holocaust. The Jews posed absolutely no strategic or political threat to Hitler. Most German Jews were wholly assimilated and considered themselves to be more German than Jewish. Only in historical retrospect do we see how tragically mistaken they were in this conviction.

The attempted annihilation of Jews was unique insofar as they were chosen as victims primarily because of their "ideological" status as Jews. So foreign were these events to the common run of human experience that one can, with reason, assent to historian Nora Levin's contention that "Auschwitz was a foreign planet."

First among the cultural breakthroughs was the publication in the '50s of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Another milestone of sorts occurred with the 1978 television miniseries *Holocaust*. Regardless of its aesthetic qualities, which indeed were few, *Holocaust* had the merit of turning the unassimilable events of the Final Solution into a tidy, palatable narrative. It contained the standard (and standardized) elements of prime-time melodrama that had become familiar to a postwar generation for which TV had become the family hearth: protagonists with whom one could readily identify, an upbeat, pro-Zionist ending, and the necessary psychological reprieve of regular commercial breaks. But therein lay the rub: "Ah! At last we understand!"—all the better to trivialize and forget.

*Schindler's List* is certainly a far cry from *Holocaust*. Though not without its flaws, with any luck it will supplant the latter as a popular point of reference for our understanding of the Third Reich's boundless capacity for inhumanity. It contains two scenes that are destined to qualify as among the most disturbing in cinematic history: the brutal liquidation of the Cracow ghetto at the hands of sadistic SS men; and the wrenching "selection" episode at a nearby work camp, where Jews deemed unfit for labor were surveyed like cattle by Nazi medical personnel and then shipped off to a local death installation.

Throughout the narrative, Spielberg displays a consummate attention to historical detail. The random, everyday character of the violence perpetrated by the Nazis against Jews is fully captured, as is the chaos and harshness of ghetto life. The deaths we are shown, and there are many, are hard, graphic—in a word, "uncinematic."

At one point, where it appears that Schindler may no longer be able to protect his Jewish laborers from the Nazi predators, Schindler promises his beloved accountant, Itzhak Stern, that he will make sure that Stern receives "special treatment." In a marvelous touch, Stern slyly demurs: after all, "special treatment" (in German: *Sonderbehandlung*) was the official Nazi euphemism for the fate awaiting the Jews at the death camps.

One of the film's central themes concerns the Nazis' phobic, ideological preoccupation with exterminating the Jews,

even when such policies conflicted with the attainment of more "rational" goals pertaining to the waging of war.

The Schindler Jews, as they were called, were spared for a time since they were engaged in productive labor essential to the German war effort. Yet their status as productive laborers was never a sufficient guarantee against the Nazis' genocidal zeal. For it was common practice for the SS to divert resources vital to the conduct of war to be used for annihilating the Jews. Thus, in 1944, when Germany's fortunes in the war had already declined precipitously, the Lodz ghetto was liquidated, despite the fact that Lodz was Poland's major industrial center and that its workforce consisted primarily of Jewish ghetto residents. As it became clear that the European war was unwinnable, the Nazis thought that they could at least triumph in their war against the Jews.

A magisterial achievement, *Schindler's List* still has its faults. Of all the stories one could tell about the Holocaust, why was Schindler's the one worth transforming into a three-and-a-half-hour epic? Schindler's tale, as rendered by novelist Thomas Keneally, is dramatic and compelling. Yet, upon reflection, one can't help but wonder about those elements of the Schindler profile that make Spielberg's film so ripe for success.

Could a partial answer be that the protagonist is a non-Jew; and that, more generally, his is a story that would have patent appeal to non-Jewish audiences? Is it because Schindler himself is a figure with whom a mass audience could readily identify, even sympathize?

With Schindler, are we not in fact presented with a genuine Christian martyr, a classical case of the "holy sinner"? Far from being a friend of the Jews, Schindler employs them, at least initially, because theirs is the cheapest labor to be found—even less expensive than that of the local Poles. He is a debauchee, a rake, with a marked appreciation for the fineries of life. A more unlikely suspect for selfless acts of heroism could hardly be found.

All the more glorious and unexpected, then, will be his final transfiguration as "savior" of the Jews. In the process of rescuing his workers—of literally purchasing their freedom from an eminently venal SS overlord—Schindler, we are told by faithful accountant Stern, has gone broke. In the movie's postscript, we learn that his postwar business ventures came to naught and that his marriage soon dissolved.

In stark contrast to Schindler, the film's Jewish characters are, as a rule, underdeveloped. The only exception is the

sidekick accountant Itzhak Stern, played by Ben Kingsley as a sort of Ashkenazi Sancho Panza. Stern displays all the foibles of the Jewish *Untermensch*: abject, circumspect, yet shrewd. We see the Jews as tragic victims and servile accommodators. But they are devoid of personality. They are the film's supernumeraries and huddled masses, waiting to be saved. It is not really their story that has been told. It is Oskar Schindler's.

Then there is the detestable and psychotic SS lieutenant Amon Goeth. Carbine in hand, he picks off Jews from his balcony window before breakfast with about as much conscience as a child killing flies. The word "sadistic" doesn't do justice to the depths of his psychopathological derangement.

Goeth is both attracted and repulsed by his Jewish housekeeper. In between savage beatings, he fantasizes about bringing her back to his native Vienna after the war. Schindler, the voice of reason even among Nazis, brings him back to his senses. Of course, all sexual contact between Germans and Jews had been forbidden by law. Goeth longs to taste the forbidden fruit, then hates himself for it. The housekeeper becomes the victim of his sublimated self-hatred.

But there is a danger in allowing a pathological figure like Goeth to personify the evils of Nazism. It suggests that all Nazis—or the ones we really have to worry about—suffered from personality disorders. At least, this is what we would like to think—insofar as it spares us the real burdens of contemplating how things

like Nazism and Auschwitz were possible.

To pathologize the Nazis and Nazism is to provide a balm for our innate human narcissism. If it's only the Amon Goeths of the world we need worry about, then our tasks of comprehension and prevention are relatively simple. The question of how you or I or our neighbor might have responded in a similar situation is never addressed.

But Goeth and his kind could not have successfully placed in motion the Final Solution without a vast amount of assistance. None of the evil perpetrated by the Nazis would have been possible without the support and cooperation, on a truly massive scale, of "ordinary men": bureaucrats, engineers, railway personnel, members of the German foreign office, *Wehrmacht* foot soldiers, repair crews, as well as men and women throughout Europe who either stood to profit from the Jews' so-called "disappearance," or who, more often, just did not care. As a historian once remarked, the road to Auschwitz was built with hate but





paved with indifference.

By pathologizing Nazi crimes, we spare ourselves the distasteful thought that, were it not for the avid participation of people very much like ourselves, the whole enterprise would have foundered early on. By isolating it as an event that occurred seemingly in a different galaxy, by considering the camps as some kind of inverted Disneyland, we set up a barrier between the evil of yesteryear and that still present among us.

In Jerusalem they have a saying: "There's no business like Shoah business." This suggests that we must constantly second-guess ourselves lest the Holocaust become fashionable, lest it be turned into kitsch. In shifting to present-day Jerusalem at the end of his film and showing us the real "Schindler Jews," Steven Spielberg has done us a service by pointedly reminding us that there is a difference between art and real life. Will such reminders, though, be sufficient? In seeing *Schindler's List* are we moved by the cinematography, by the actors, by its epic visual qualities? Or is it for the actual victims of the Holocaust that we shed our tears?

What precisely does *Schindler's List* help us to remember? Will it simply be recalled as an Academy Award-winning motion picture and as one of the 10 top-grossing films of 1994? Now that Hollywood has paid homage to the greatest crime of the modern era, can it return in good conscience to its normal "blockbuster" mode?

These are more than idle questions. Ours is an era that has a special difficulty in distinguishing appearances from reality. Our comprehension of the past is less and less shaped by the complexities of the written word and the intimacy of human dialogue. Increasingly, our understanding of history is transmitted via the fleeting imagery of mass media. Whether we like it or not, these media have become primary vehicles of socialization. They dictate the way we see the world.

None of these remarks are meant as a specific criticism of *Schindler's List*. They pertain more to the informational structure of late capitalist society, which applies to the production and reception of virtually all films. More specifically, they imply that we can't allow such media to educate us; and that, at best, films such as *Schindler's List* can only be part of a more general process of individual and collective coming to terms with the past.

A key historical irony here is that the Third Reich was one of the most aesthetically self-conscious regimes the world has known. It is common knowledge that Hitler himself was a failed artist. An inveterate admirer of Wagner, he at some level envisioned the Third Reich as a gigantic Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*—a "total work of art." From *Triumph of the Will* to *Jud Suss* to the weekly newsreel footage, regime operatives knew well how to bend cinematic art to their purposes. Goebbels' entire ministry of propaganda would be inconceivable apart from its expert demagogic employment of mass media such as radio and film.

In fact, as the war ground to its conclusion in 1945, Goebbels, in order to boost sagging morale, made the fol-

lowing telltale appeal couched in revealing, cinematic terms: "Gentlemen, in a hundred years still another color film will portray the terrible days we are undergoing now. Do you want to play a role in that film which will let you live again in a hundred years? Every one of you has to choose the person he wishes to be in a hundred years. I can assure you that it will be a tremendous film, exciting and beautiful, and worth holding steady for."

Let us make sure that we in no way become the heirs to this prototypical Nazi confusion between art and life, an ever-present temptation in our society. ◀

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## Schindler's choice

By H.R. Shapiro

**S***chindler's List* is now bringing awareness of the Holocaust to millions of Americans. But is it really a film about the meaning of that horror or simply a story within it, one that obscures as much as it reveals?

Steven Spielberg, hopefully unawares, has made a film that does not tell the story of the vast majority of Jews, but only of a small elite who were part of the Nazi apparatus. Spielberg's Jews are an important and integral arm of the Holocaust. They represent the *Judenrate*, or the Nazi-formed Jewish Councils.

The Nazis formed the *Judenrate* to implement Nazi policy in the Jewish community and, more importantly, to divide and conquer the Jews and to crush any resistance to the Nazis. The Jews who worked with Schindler were all leaders of the *Judenrate*.

Schindler may well have been a "righteous person," as were numerous other Germans, and he did save some 1,000 Jews from the Plaszow-Cracow camp. But Schindler was a figure within the Nazi apparatus and a part of the actual Jewish Holocaust.

Hannah Arendt, in her great study of the Jewish Holocaust, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, informs us: "Wherever Jews lived, there were recognized Jewish leaders, and this leadership, almost without exception, cooperated in one way or another, for one reason or another, with the Nazis. The whole truth was that if the Jewish people had really been unorganized and leaderless, there would have been chaos and plenty of misery but the total number of victims would hardly have been between 4 and 6.5 million people."

The *Judenrate* were simulated state governments. Each had its own instruments of terror, the *Ornungsdienst* and *Zivilabteilung* (Nazi-Jewish and Secret Police), ministries of housing, food and welfare, etc., as well as the power to tax their communities and provide slave labor, at no charge, to the Nazi war machine. These Nazi-Jewish councils divided

privileged Jews from non-privileged. This policy was accepted by the Jewish elite in Germany and was extended after September 1939 to Poland and other occupied areas, so that even before the June 1941 Nazi attack on the USSR, Eastern Europe's Jews were atomized and isolated.

The function of the *Judenrate* was to contain and register all Jews in the old and newly formed ghettos. The obvious objective was to save the "better Jews" (themselves, to begin with) by selecting others among their own people to be sent to their deaths. "To a Jew, this role of the Jewish leaders in the destruction of their own people is undoubtedly the darkest chapter of the whole dark story," Arendt concluded.

Isaiah Trunk, in *Judenrat*, writes that "for ghetto inmates the Jewish Councils were the visible organs of oppression. ... Small wonder that all the pent-up hatred for the relatively remote Nazi enemy was aimed at the one visible adversary, the hated Councils."

News of the genocide of the summer of 1941 reached Warsaw almost overnight, and the great majority of Jews by the end of that year. The *Judenrate*, however, through secrecy and lies, convinced the Jewish masses that reports of horrors to the east were only rumors, and that Jews were merely being "resettled." With potential opposition thus neutralized, the Nazis were able to deport and exterminate most of the Warsaw Jews. By contrast, those who had some connection to the *Judenrate* and their associates, especially the privileged and the wealthy, survived the war.

The *Judenrate* leaders, writes historian L. Yahil, "perceived Jewish resistance as a threat to the existence of the ghetto or as a personal threat." Thus the Jewish communities at large lost the organizational means and spirit to defend themselves. This is what enabled the Nazis to blindside and murder most of the Jews in eastern Poland, the Baltic states and in the occupied USSR. M. Tenenbaum-Tamaroff, a young resistance leader who participated in revolts in Warsaw and other cities to the north, led a 1943 revolt in Bialystok to free the Jews who were on their way to the trains. The young Jews who were trying to effect the escape of the people of the city were thwarted by the *Judenrate* and lost their lives in battle with the Nazis.

"In Germany today," wrote Arendt in 1963, "[the] notion of 'prominent' Jews has not yet been forgotten. While the veterans and other privileged Jewish groups are no longer mentioned, the fate of 'famous' Jews is still deplored at the expense of all others. There are more than a few people, especially among the cultural elite, who still publicly regret the fact that Germany sent Einstein packing, without realizing it was a much greater crime to kill little Hans Cohn from around the corner, even though he was no genius."

Schindler's importance in history, ironically, is that his

good works demonstrate the utter Nazification of the *Judenrate*. From Thomas Keneally's novel *Schindler's List*, as well as from Malvina Grad's autobiography, *The Krakow Ghetto and the Plaszow Camp Remembered*, one learns that virtually every principal character in the book and the film was a member of or associated with the Cracow *Judenrat*, or with the Nazis per se.

None of this is clear in the film. Schindler, no doubt for mere convenience, joined the Nazi Party in 1938 and became an agent of the *Abwehr* (counterintelligence service) in Cracow before the war in 1939. He returned to Cracow



after Germany had invaded Poland, still an *Abwehr* agent, to dodge the draft and to make his fortune with Jewish slave-labor.

One of Schindler's contacts, Dr. R. Kastner, in Hungary (a member of the *Judenrat* in Pest, and an agent of the Jewish Agency in Palestine) also saved some Jews—saved exactly 1,684, including his relatives and friends, according to Arendt. Kastner's privileged Jews survived through deals with Eichmann and the Zionist Jewish Agency, while almost 500,000 unsuspecting Jews in Hungary were exterminated.

Kastner was later tried in Israel for selecting who should and who should not survive. Zionist courts, of course, whitewashed Kastner—that is, the *Judenrate*—but, according to an Israeli army officer, Israeli agents assassinated him, no doubt to remove him from history.

*Schindler's List* is a film in which Schindler is portrayed as larger than life, while the Jewish people are rendered invisible. Why does Spielberg celebrate Schindler, a CEO not unlike Herman Wouk's Captain Queeg in *The Caine Mutiny*? Spielberg may really believe that it is not the good man who will save the world but the good CEO (the good despot), in Hollywood or elsewhere, who, although he holds the people in slavery, does so for their salvation.

H.R. Shapiro is a writer who lives in California.

## E D U C A T I O N

# Making a school's choices

By Barbara Miner

Parent Denise Ferguson remembers the day in the spring of 1990 when the Local School Council (LSC) at Hefferan Elementary School met with the principal to talk about the next year's budget. The LSC was only a few months old, part of a citywide reform effort that set up councils—made up largely of parents and given powers such as the authority to hire and fire principals—in each school.

The parents, unused to having real decision-making power, initially deferred to the principal. But that was to change. According to Ferguson, the principal suggested that discretionary school monies be used to hire a full-time truant officer and a half-time choir director to teach gospel music. "And this," she adds, "was in a school that had great attendance rates, yet had maps from 1945 that still had Rhodesia, and had only four operating computers"—and where "our kids don't need to learn gospel music [because] they get that on weekends."

Parents were upset at the principal's suggestions and let him know it. The council polled the teachers and then decided to spend the money in other ways—hiring a new teacher for

a computer lab, and purchasing new books and maps. They also made another crucial decision: to hire a new principal who would take charge at the end of the school year.

Parents having the power to make such decisions may seem a dream to many of those who have struggled to get administrators to listen to their advice—let alone take it seriously. But such parental power is becoming the norm in Chicago.

While some school reforms focus on changes in curriculum or teacher training, the Chicago effort targets what is generally called "governance"—that is, who makes the decisions in schools. The reforms, considered the most ambitious of any major urban school district in the country, were mandated by state law in 1988 and were the result of widespread, long-term community organizing to improve Chicago's public schools. One major goal was to cut the powers of the central office, which in Chicago had earned national notoriety for its entrenched bureaucratic practices, and to turn over as much decision-making as possible to the local schools.

The heart of the Chicago reform is the establishment of elected LSCs in each of the city's almost 600 schools.

Each council has six parents, two community representatives, two teachers, the principal and, in the high schools, a student. The parents and community representatives on the board are elected by parents and community residents. The student and teacher representatives are appointed by the Board of Education following advisory elections by their peers at each school.

The verdict is still out on whether this ambitious reform effort will accomplish its ultimate goal: improving the educational performance of the approximately 440,000 students in the city's public schools, roughly 90 percent of whom are non-white. Yet no one denies the importance of the reform or its uniqueness. Not only do the councils have the authority to hire or fire principals, but they also approve the school's budget and school-improvement plan that outlines changes in curriculum and teaching practices.

Perhaps the best way to begin to understand the many complexities and contradictions involved in the Chicago reform process is to look at how the reform has affected one school where the council appears to have worked particularly well, and to examine how some of the parents there view the reform. Hefferan, a kindergarten-through-eighth-grade elementary school, is located on the city's West Side in a neighborhood whose appearance reflects the stereotype of a troubled inner city. Boarded-up buildings are common; trash and broken bottles litter the streets.

Hefferan Principal Patricia Harvey doesn't allow outdoor recess because she cannot guarantee the children's safety, given the number of drug dealers and alcoholics who hang out near the school. All but one of Hefferan's 676 students are African-American, and 90 percent of the students are eligible for the free or reduced-price federal lunch program.

In the spring of 1990, in one of its



first major decisions, the LSC hired Harvey, a former teacher, assistant principal and central office administrator. Harvey has clearly played a key role in changes at Hefferan. She abolished tracking systems and worked with the staff to provide more time for planning. For example, Harvey scheduled one day a week for students to attend special courses such as art, music and gym so that classroom teachers could have a full day for in-service training, planning, or attending workshops.

Perhaps most important, Harvey worked to establish a spirit of teamwork that encourages parents, community members and school staff to work together. Asked what she felt was the most important lesson learned during the almost four years that the LSC has been at work at Hefferan, Harvey said: "You can't build a house of shared decision-making without a foundation of trust, acceptance and real teamwork."

Parents active at the school credit Harvey with helping to establish a new atmosphere. "No one can do everything by themselves, and the principal here decided that instead of leadership and followers, it would be everybody together," says parent Cheryl Harris, who has a third grader and an eighth grader at the school. "Ever since I've been here, I've never seen her office door closed."

Ferguson, who was president of Hefferan's LSC for three years and who is now a staff member working on parent involvement and student services, says the council's main benefit has been to give parents a new role. "Before the LSC, parents had no voice," she says. "Parents were told they were welcome at the school, but were given very menial tasks. ... After the reform, not only could we make decisions, we could help choose the leadership."

But many LSCs do not run as smoothly as Hefferan's, says Ferguson, who has also served on a high school council. That experience, she says "was a nightmare. It ended up holding that school hostage." Council mem-

bers didn't respect each other, some were on personal power trips, and others had political agendas they were trying to push. She also believes that the original legislation mandating the councils was flawed because it didn't mandate adequate monies to train council members or give the councils a specific budget, "not even for stamps."

Council members should be paid because of the immense time commitment required to do the job well, Ferguson says. And councils must address the larger political issue of declining school budgets. "If you have 500 things to do and no budget," she says, "it's like having a horse you shoot in the starting gate and then say, 'Run!'"

The council at Hefferan also faces the same nagging problem that has plagued other councils: parental burn-out. At Hefferan, for example, two of the six parent seats were unfilled in late February.

Mildred Wiley, the current presi-

dent of Hefferan's LSC, values the councils but fears that business and political leaders may be losing patience and may demand results faster than the councils can produce.

The state law mandating the reform called for significant achievements in school performance after five years. This mandate implicitly threatens more drastic measures—such as the institution of private school voucher plans to replace the system of public education—if changes don't occur rapidly.

"I'm scared the state will just come in and take over," Wiley says. "This school has undergone a distinct change, from the outside [appearance] to the curriculum in the classroom. I would hate to see an end to all the good things that we have planned." ▴

Barbara Miner is the managing editor of *Rethinking Schools*, a Milwaukee-based education newspaper in which this article first appeared.

## GRADING THE REFORMS

**I**s Chicago's school reform making a difference in the city's schools? Yes, according to a report by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, headquartered at the University of Chicago. At the same time, the change in decision-making at the schools is insufficient to guarantee improved student achievement. Budget cuts, in particular, could seriously undercut the reform effort, the report noted.

The consortium is an affiliation of local universities, professional groups, education research and advocacy groups, the state Board of Education and the Chicago public schools. Its study was the first comprehensive research on the Chicago school reform experiment.

In a report last fall that focused on elementary schools, the consortium concluded there were major improvements in education in about 40 percent of the Chicago system's elementary schools. "Is the restructuring of the Chicago public school system evolving in ways that can lead to major improve-

ments in student learning?" the report asks. "We answer 'yes.'"

The report found that systemic reform was most noticeable in schools that had instituted "strong democracies" characterized by collaboration among teachers, parents and the principal and that had begun debate over the school's goals. About one-third of the schools studied fit this description. Such schools were spread throughout the city and cut across racial, ethnic and economic lines—although progress was more likely in small schools.

While finding that the first phase of the reform process was a success, the report went on to note the precarious nature of the reform. "Loss of funds at this time would be especially disastrous," the report concluded. "Budget problems have dominated the reform process during the first five years. Unless they can be placed on the back burner, the school system may never be able to devote sufficient attention to how it can best support the schools."

—B.M.

# I N P R I N T

## Shades of green

By David Moberg

**E**nvironmentalism is less a coherent ideology than a vague sense that much of humankind's activity is threatening the natural environment—and consequently humanity itself. Yet it's currently the main challenge to the overweening triumph of capitalist values.

The evolution of the environmentalist idea has not been straightforward. Forerunners range from sportsmen attempting to preserve big game domains to nuclear test protesters after World War II. Writing a history of environmentalism involves appropriating such unwitting predecessors for the sake of current arguments.

In *A Fierce Green Fire*, journalist Philip Shabecoff describes Thoreau as the "spiritual founder" of the American environmental movement. Yet in many other countries, Walden-pond-style retreats from civilization are far less central to environmentalist thinking than in ours. In his concise history, Kirkpatrick Sale suggests that Rachel Carson, who exposed the effects of pesticides in the early '60s, is the true wellspring of contemporary environmentalism.

Robert Gottlieb, in *Forcing the Spring*, pays tribute to both strands: to those conservationists who followed in Thoreau's wake (such as Bob Marshall of The Wilderness Society) as well as to Carson's successors in the war against pollution. Yet he also claims a place of honor for someone unknown to most "greens"—Alice Hamilton, the early 20th-century crusader against workplace "industrial poisons."

Gottlieb's thought-provoking and immensely important history of environmentalism is an argument for a movement that could exist but doesn't. He sees environmentalism as "a core concept of a complex of social movements that first

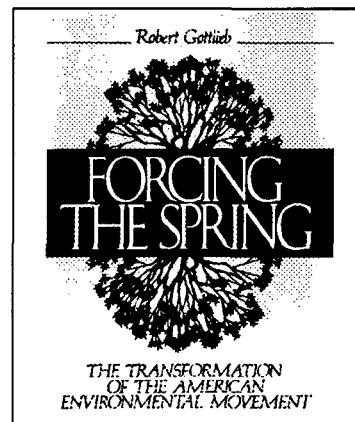
appeared in response to [accelerating] urban and industrial changes." Many participants in these movements—from critics of urban planning and consumerism to conservationists and opponents of pollution—would not have recognized that they had much in common. And they only rarely have linked up with other movements critical of the urban-industrial order, such as those of blacks, women, labor or socialists. Yet Gottlieb argues, persuasively, that these fragments could soon converge in common cause.

Environmentalism has emerged most strongly in the wealthier, industrial countries. This is not simply a matter of green consumerism; those in industrialized countries also sense that something has been lost through the rapacious industrialization that made them affluent—whether it's a closer, more spiritual link with nature, or simply a world free of pollution.

But over the past few decades it has become clearer not only that there is a common global environmental crisis but also that there is a grave inequity in how environmental degradation has been inflicted. Global warming and ozone holes may doom us all, but within the United States, minorities, the poor and blue-collar workers are most vulnerable to many environmental assaults, from dumps and incinerators to toxins at work.

And so the U.S. environmental movement has itself begun to split—between big Washington-based organizations, with their professional lobbyists for incremental reform, and a more militant, socially diverse grass-roots movement, often led by women and involving Latino, African-American and working-class communities.

Environmental inequality is global. Although the desperation of the very poor takes its toll



**A Fierce Green Fire**  
By Philip Shabecoff  
Hill & Wang

**The Green Revolution**  
By Kirkpatrick Sale  
Hill & Wang

**Forcing the Spring**  
By Robert Gottlieb  
Island Press

**The Ecology of Commerce**  
By Paul Hawken  
HarperBusiness

**Costing the Earth**  
By Frances Cairncross  
Harvard Business School Press

**How Much is Enough?**  
By Alan Durning  
W.W. Norton

**Trade and the Environment**  
Durwood Zaelke et al., editors  
Island Press

(through deforestation, for example), it is the most affluent countries that are responsible for most of the damage humans have wrought upon the environment. If everyone were to share in the waste and resource exploitation inherent in the contemporary American lifestyle, the environment could not long survive.

And so environmentalism has become more of an issue of social justice, not just of the protection of nature. There are common flaws in modern society—in its social structures, technology and culture—that lead to mistreatment of both nature and humanity. Throughout most of the world, both workers and nature are still treated as marketable commodities to be bought at the lowest possible price.

Environmentalism challenges capitalist economics because it rejects treating nature as simply an input to the economy—much as socialists once forcefully argued that people and their work were more than mere commodities. Our economies are subordinate to, and must be compatible with, the ecosystem, both globally and locally.

As it stands now, the market doesn't reflect the environmental costs of business. If environmental costs (such as damage to human health) were subtracted from measures of economic production, we would find that there has been little real net growth in human wealth in recent decades.

In their respective books, businessman Paul Hawken, environmentalist Alan Durning (of Worldwatch Institute) and journalist Frances Cairncross (of *The Economist*) all insist that to correct the flaws of the market, governments must intervene—through taxes, “green fees” and other mechanisms—to raise the price of environmentally destructive business practices. To that end Hawken wants to shift taxes from “goods” (within which he includes income) to “bads” (resource depletion and waste production). Yet green taxes are extremely hard to estimate (let alone impose); to work properly they need to be buttressed by a clear government environmental/industrial policy.

Hawken, much praised for promoting environmental values in his mail-order business, sees even the best contemporary corporate practice as thoroughly inadequate; industry, he argues, must be completely “redesigned.” He suggests, plausibly, that technology can lead to an improved quality of life with less of an environmental impact. Energy consumption could be reduced by 80 percent in the United States with no loss of goods and services. Simi-

larly, the computer revolution may “dematerialize” products as it has already miniaturized them.

Though there are limits to growth, it is clear that technological and social innovation can improve the lives of people in most of the world. But the growth of multinationals and deregulated international trade threatens to encourage competition through lowered standards rather than greater efficiency, economist Herman Daly suggests in a splendid little essay in the edited volume *Trade and the Environment*. Daly proposes that nations raise environmental standards and require anyone who wishes to sell in their markets to meet those standards. Similarly, Hawken suggests that governments encourage greener trade by providing greater trade access for countries qualifying as “most sustainable nations.”

These are powerful arguments. But none of them fully come to grips with the vast range of political power committed to maintaining the current exploitation of both people and the environment. The fundamental redesign of industry will require the redesign of society and government in a more democratic, egalitarian fashion. That will require the different strands of environmentalism to coalesce into a political movement that can link up with movements for social and economic justice. In the end, environmentalism is not just about clear skies and unsullied wilderness: it's about power and the control of human wealth. ▴

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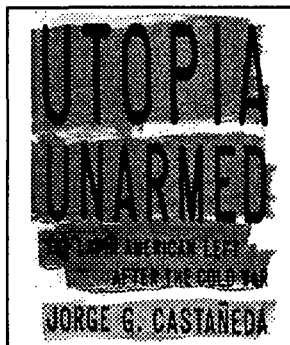


# Hope against hope

By Ilan Stavans

A courageous journalist known for his vociferous attacks against government corruption south of the border, Jorge Castañeda has delivered in *Utopia Unarmed* an admirable, though occasionally overwritten, portrait of left-wing hope and deception in the Hispanic world. Utopia means "no place" in Greek, and from the late 19th century to the defeat of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua's presidential election in the late '80s, the journey of the left in Latin America has often reached a dead end.

Castañeda, a frequent contributor to the Mexican opposition magazine *Proceso* and currently a professor of political science at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, revisits crucial events and figures, ending with a provocative reflection on what the future might bring. Although his main focus is the current post-Cold War crucible, a landscape marked by a dismantled and Balkanized Soviet Union and ferocious ethnic wars in Eastern Europe, he begins his story much earlier.



**Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left After the Cold War**  
By Jorge G. Castañeda  
Knopf  
498 pp., \$27.50

As Castañeda is quick to point out, the history of the left south of the border is a labyrinthine one. As a recognizable alternative, it traces its roots to José Martí's struggle in exile for Cuba's freedom and independence before the Spanish-American War of 1898, and to the writings and actions of Puerto Rican Eugenio María de Hostos, a little-known figure in the English-speaking world but a crucial influence on the Hispanic community in the United States.

At the center of the experience of the contemporary Latin American left lies the Cuban

Revolution of 1958, at once triumph and tragedy. The cathartic Sierra Maestra experience and the mythological stature of *El Líder*, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, and the other guerrillas, convinced many, from the Argentine Pampas to Ciudad Juárez, that socialism was the true path to a future of equality and freedom. Scores of intellectuals—from Mario Vargas Llosa and Octavio Paz to Gabriel García Márquez and Carlos Fuentes—embraced the revolution as a Second Coming.

But Castro's terrible human rights record and his tense relationship with the continent's intelligentsia soon made many enemies: Paz and Vargas Llosa slowly moved to a center-right ideological position (the latter even ran for Peru's presidency in 1990 against Alberto Fujimori), and Fuentes broke with the Cuban Revolution, although never with the left. The tensions between Fidel and the rest of the Latin American intelligentsia reached their peak in the so-called Padilla affair, when Heberto Padilla, a celebrated prize-winning poet and diplomat on the island, was imprisoned and forced to publicly confess to crimes he never committed. The debacle left many acutely skeptical of the Cuban experiment and uncertain about the overall objective of socialism.

If the Cuban Revolution marked one kind of turning point, the debt crisis of the '80s marked another, whose implications are still being played out. Rather than nationalizing huge properties and corporations, contemporary Latin American leaders, led by the neo-Peronists Carlos Saúl Menem in Argentina and Carlos Salinas de Gortari in Mexico, are attempting to emulate the U.S. model of a free-market economy. Consequently, the left has lost its momentum and is forced to redefine its goals.

Where to go? Should the region continue to import foreign economic models? Should it look to the pre-Columbian past, say Aztec or Inca, for an alternative to corruption and political upheaval? Abimael Guzmán, the imprisoned leader of Peru's Shining Path, has come to symbolize an extreme desire to incorporate the Maoist system to an Inca milieu, to follow a different pattern than that set by Castro in the Caribbean. By contrast, Chiapas' Zapatistas have distanced themselves as much as possible from the Shining Path (as well as from Castro and Daniel Ortega's Sandinistas), portraying their cause as a struggle for the forgotten Indians and hoping to achieve democracy, not tyranny, in Mexico.

The 21st century, claims Castañeda, will offer a different concept of utopia: to critique capitalism for its savagery is insufficient. The best option, I must agree with Castañeda, is a peaceful transition to power—a democratic vision of socialism where human injustice is reduced through government programs. To become a convincing opposition force, the Latin American left must revisit its past to fully understand its mistakes. Castañeda's book is a good first step. ◀

**Ilan Stavans**, a Mexican critic and novelist, teaches at Amherst College. His book, *The Hispanic Condition: Reflections on Culture and Identity in America*, is forthcoming from HarperCollins.

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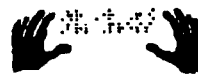
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Continued from page 40  
capacity for making trouble.

As the '80s wore on, the MLP even became critical of Albania and admitted, at last, that Stalin had made lots of mistakes.

These may seem like small concessions to reality. But one must try to imagine the seriousness with which these people reviewed the past, rethought their dogma, questioned it, and changed their minds. The language of the document announcing the party's demise is a bit stilted, as ever. But there are no slogans. There is even the hint of a personal tone to it.

"Our forces have slowly eroded," the MLP Central Committee wrote, "while the pressures on us have mounted. Our industrial concentration has been nearly extinguished, while our capacity for intervening in the social movements has by and large become marginal. Outstanding theoretical problems have multiplied beyond our ability to satisfactorily address them. ... No amount of tinkering, adjustments or reorganization can patch things back together again. We no longer are what we once were."

It is remarkable for a radical group, no matter how tiny, to make such an admission. Reading the MLP statement, I recalled an essay in Dwight Macdonald's *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*. "I have always had a sneaking admiration for the editors of a tiny mimeographed journal called *Proletarian Outlook*," Macdonald confessed. Posing the traditional question "What is to be done?" the group had answered it, simply and astonishingly: "Nothing. Absolutely nothing." And they had closed up shop.

More than half a century separates the fate of *Proletarian Outlook* from that of *The Workers Advocate*. Historic moments on this order come but once in a lifetime. Now I regret never having purchased the MLP hymnal, "*Down with Ronald Reagan, Chieftain of Capitalist Reaction*" and *Other Songs of Revolutionary Struggle and Socialism*. It would make a fine memento of days gone by. It possesses everything that fascinated me about the group: the stridency, the tin ear for language--and the intransigence toward people and things who were worth the hostility. There are livelier denunciations of Reagan than "chieftain of capitalist reaction." But are they more accurate?

"Rather than endure further drift," writes the MLP in its adieu, "rather than permit our organization to become a mockery of its past, the Central Committee prefers [to] recognize that the end has come, and make a clean break of things, the better to clear the way for whatever the future will bring."

It has to be the most emotionally charged sentence in the party's voluminous literature. I read it over and over again, a little stunned. Rare is such honesty, with its own quiet honor. And rarer still, such hope. ▶

Scott McLemee is the editor, with Paul LeBlanc, of *C.L.R. James and Revolutionary Marxism: Selected Writings 1939-1949* (Humanities Press).



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# Nothing to be done

By Scott McLemee

About 10 years ago, I discovered *The Workers' Advocate*, an almost unreadable newspaper produced by the Central Committee of the Marxist-Leninist Party USA. If ever a journal seemed written by committee, it was the *Advocate*. Articles were unsigned. They seemed to have been written with a set of quotas in mind—so many quotations from Lenin per page, so many denunciations of U.S. imperialism and Soviet social-fascism per issue. Each issue bore, next to the title, a bold red star, in which was inscribed the hammer and sickle. The party also sponsored a theoretical journal, *Proletarian Internationalism*, in which there appeared a seemingly endless series of translations from the memoirs of Enver Hoxha, general secretary of the Party of Labor of Albania. Then there were the pamphlets, whose titles—such as “Build the Marxist-Leninist Party Without the Social Chauvinists and Against the Social Chauvinists”—doubled as slogans.

One doubts that many people outside the Marxist-Leninist Party USA ever read these publications from start to finish. But I tried—for a few months, anyway. Those were the darkest years of the Reagan onslaught. And for reasons that do not admit of strictly rational analysis, I became very fond of the MLP press. It was never a matter of accepting their politics. Yet I acquired a taste for the MLP style: the wooden prose, the humorlessness, the impersonal militancy. Here was bombast equal to Reagan's own.

But now *The Workers' Advocate* is no more. In the traditional fashion, splinters formed in recent years, taking members and energy out of the MLP. It faced the lonely responsibility of figuring out what went wrong in Albania (which, like the rest of Eastern Europe, has gone toward market capitalism). Then, late last year, the Marxist-Leninist Party USA dissolved itself.

It will not be missed. The MLP's demise, like its existence, belongs to the sorriest chapter of the history of the American left: the experience, repeated throughout this century, of fetishizing

distant revolutions or glorifying “progressive” dictators. The MLP was an especially absurd instance of this. How could anyone refer to Albania as “the bright red bastion of proletarian internationalism” and keep a straight face?

But that is not the whole story. For there is some nobility in the party's decision to liquidate.

The group first emerged from the anti-war movement in 1969, beginning life with the grand title of the American Communist Workers Movement (Marxist-Leninist). After changing its name to the Central Organization of U.S. Marxist-Leninists, it eventually shifted loyalties from Mao's China to Hoxha's Albania. By 1980, the group had grown by leaps and bounds—into the very low hundreds. On Jan. 1, 1980, it changed its name once again, now to the Marxist-Leninist Party. “Let the ruling class tremble!” proclaimed its founding manifesto, ever confident.

Not everything about the party was so deserving of parody. Most of the MLP cadre were factory workers—not during vacation from school, but for years and decades. And their publications *always* drove home, however stridently, two points worth making: that workers and bosses have no interests in common and that workers have to fight for themselves, relying on nothing but their own

*Continued on page 39*

IN THE END

